DAZZLE

MINARI ENDOH

6

TOKYOPOP

執事と王子

遠藤海成
MINARI ENDOH

DAZZLE™

Vol. 9

Minari Endoh

TOKYOPOP®

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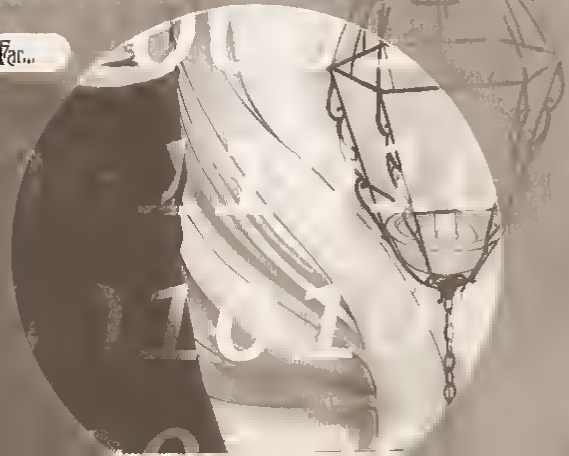
When Rahzel's father suddenly kicked her out to go on a training journey and hone her magical abilities, she immediately fell in with Alzeid, an albino magic user in search of his father's killer. Baroqueheat, Alzeid's associate from his army days whose arm turns into a blade, took quite a liking to Rahzel--much to her dismay. Yet somehow, through multiple trials and adventures, this mismatched trio formed a bond as strong as a family's ties.

Each of them has secrets they wanted to keep from each other--secrets that eventually came out. When she was nine years old, Rahzenshia Rose's mother tried to kill her, and Rahzenshia reacted in deadly self-defense. Her real father then abandoned her in the forest, where a stranger found her and she started a new life with her adopted father--changing her name to Rahzel. Alzeid is actually a clone of a man named Second, who was Baroqueheat's oldest sister Natsume's lover until--as far as everyone in their hometown, Prometheus, knows--Second suddenly killed her and stole her body, refusing to explain himself before vanishing forever. Even though Alzeid has the face of the man who killed his beloved sister, Baroqueheat had promised Natsume that he would help Alzeid, and he has sworn to live up to that promise. Alzeid, however, believes that his father's killer is a woman, who matches Natsume's description--and the residents of Prometheus are skeptical that a man as powerful as Second could have been killed.

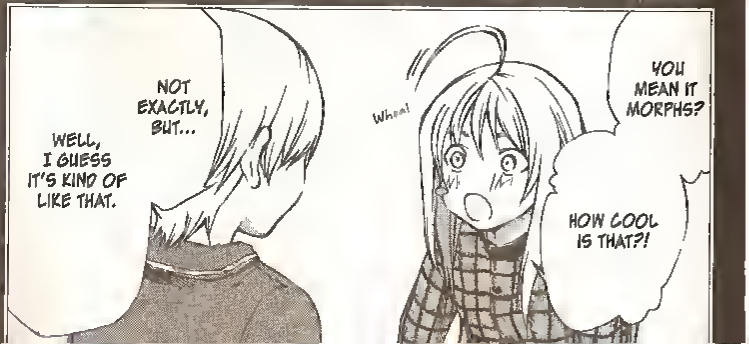
In the town of Acanea, the trio's friend Rayborn died and Baroqueheat's hand was damaged. While Rahzel returned Rayborn's body to his father, Baroqueheat and Alzeid traveled to Prometheus so that Baroqueheat's other sister Branowen could repair his hand, after which the trio planned to meet back up in the town of Velheve. However, Prometheus came as quite a shock to Alzeid--everyone there knows who he is, as Second was a chief scientist in the Prometheus project and one of the founders of the town. Alzeid found Baroqueheat's long concealment of this information especially hurtful.

One of Baroqueheat's older brothers, Kuara, has been observing the trio and pulling strings behind the scenes, accompanied by a nameless little albino boy who Kuara also calls "Alzeid" and who he has trained to be a deadly monster. After making sporadic and cryptic appearances, Kuara finally confronted Rahzel, telling her that he's her enemy and that since he will hurt her the next time they meet, she had better get stronger if she doesn't want to die. And now, Rahzel's unexplained reluctance to go to Velheve, where Alzeid hopes to find clues to his father's killer, has started her down the road to Prometheus as well.

Story So Far...

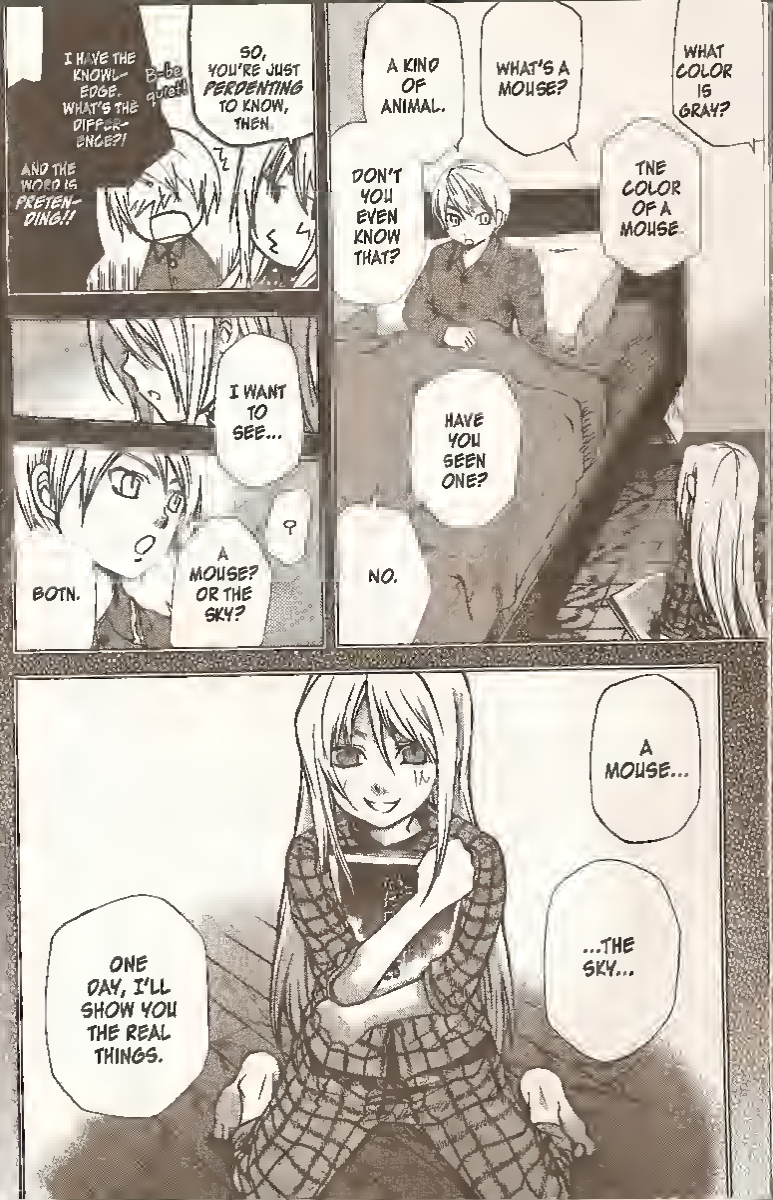


WOW, THERE'RE SO MANY OF THEM.
BLUE DURING THE DAY.
BLACK AT NIGHT.
WHITE IF IT'S CLOUDY.
GRAY WHEN IT RAINS.
IDIOT. THERE'S ONLY ONE SKY.
NO, THEY DON'T SWITCH AROUND.
IT JUST LOOKS DIFFERENT.
YOU MEAN THEY SWITCH AROUND?
?


NOT EXACTLY, BUT...
WELL, I GUESS IT'S KIND OF LIKE THAT.
Whoa!
YOU MEAN IT MORPHS?
HOW COOL IS THAT?!

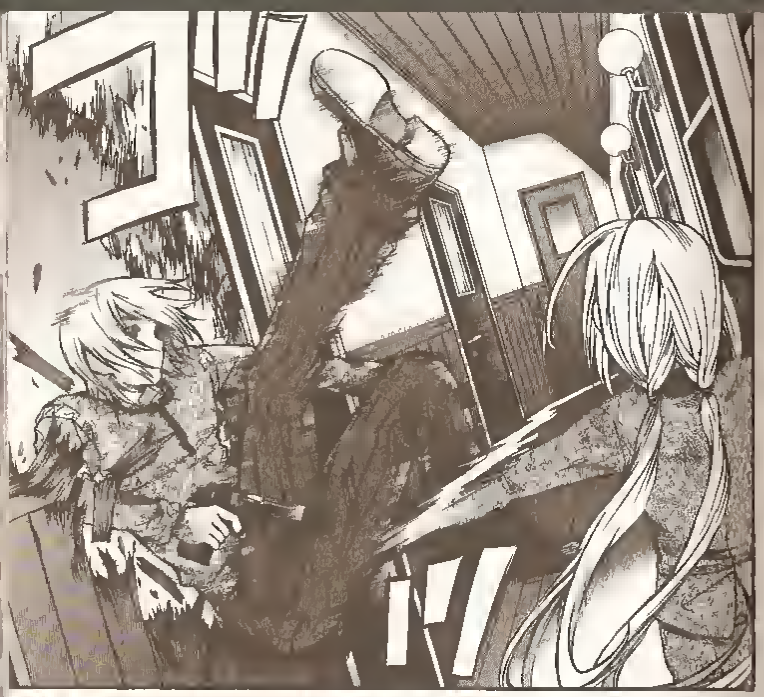
Shhh!

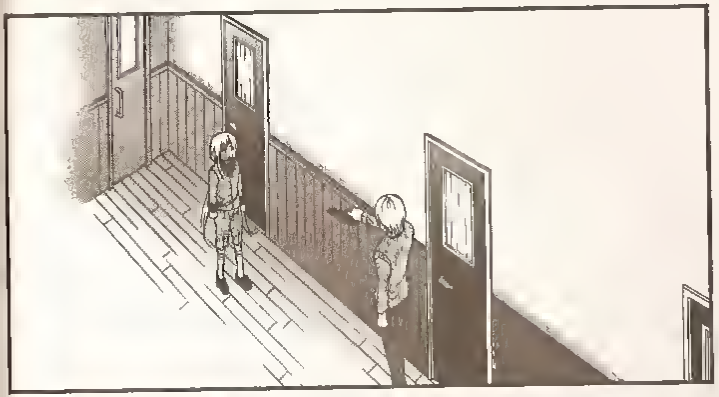
Chapter 62:
Such a Cold Night's Hand
Part 2: Under the Deep Blue Sky

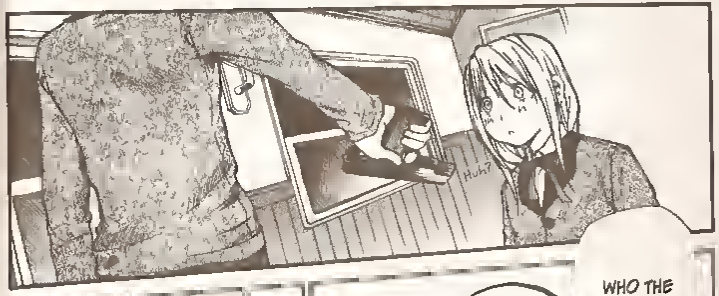

I HAVE THE KNOWL-EDGE. WHAT'S THE DIFF-ER-ENCE?!
B-be quiet!
AND THE WORD IS PRETEN-DING!!
SO, YOU'RE JUST PRETENTING TO KNOW, THEN.
I WANT TO SEE...
A MOUSE? OR THE SKY?
BOTH.
A KIND OF ANIMAL.
WHAT'S A MOUSE?
WHAT COLOR IS GRAY?
DON'T YOU EVEN KNOW THAT?
THE COLOR OF A MOUSE.
HAVE YOU SEEN ONE?
NO.
A MOUSE...
...THE SKY...
ONE DAY, I'LL SHOW YOU THE REAL THINGS.

BESIDES, I NEVER KNOW IF YOU'RE TELLING THE TRUTH OR NOT.
SO SAY WHATEVER YOU WANT.
I'll read a book or something.
WHOA. GIVING UP ALREADY?
Ha ha ha
WELL, OKAY THEN. I'LL OBLIGE YOU.
WELL ...
...WHERE SHOULD I BEGIN?
ERR, THAT'S NOT RIGHT. LONG SEE NO TIME?
SEE NO LONG TIME?
THAT ISN'T IT, HUH? UMM...
UMMM... LONG TIME SEE NO.
RIGHT!! BIG SISTER SAID YOU SHOULD ALWAYS GREET
I GUESS A GREETING IS IN ORDER, RIGHT?

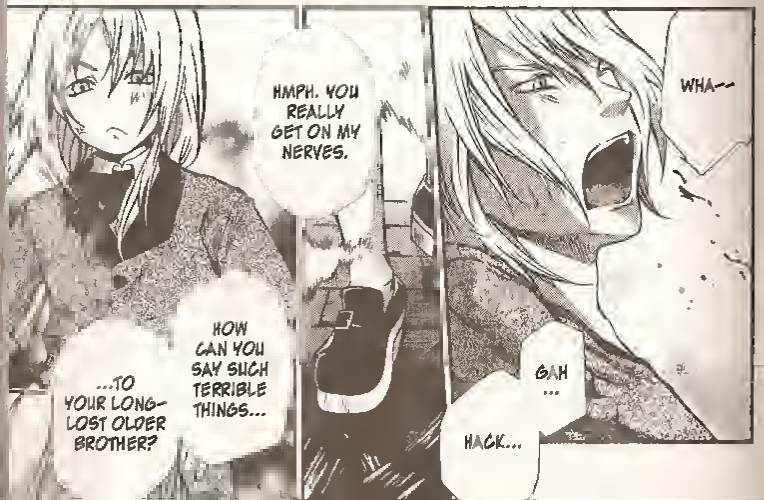
BIG BROTHER AND LITTLE BROTHER?
YOU MEAN MY FATHER AND BAROQUE-HEAT?
I DON'T WANT YOU TO GET IN THE WAY.
BIG BROTHER AND LITTLE BROTHER ARE MEETING AFTER MORE THAN TEN YEARS.
I WONDER ...
WHAT DO YOU THINK, RAHZEL?
I DON'T REALLY CARE.
I'M TIRED OF BEING JERKED AROUND LIKE THIS.
OH, DID I OFFEND YOU?
Sorry






HUH?

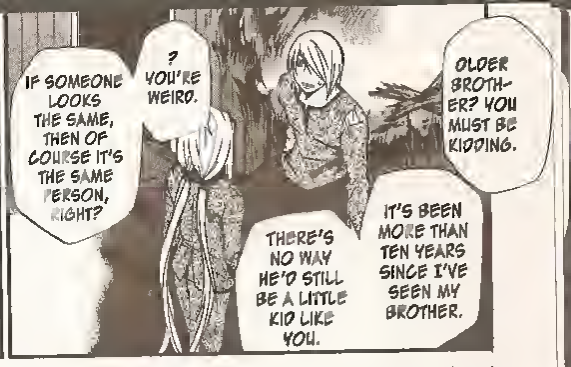
WHO THE HECK ARE YOU?
WHAT DO YOU WANT FROM ME?


WHA--
GAH...
HACK...
HMPH. YOU REALLY GET ON MY NERVES.
HOW CAN YOU SAY SUCH TERRIBLE THINGS...
...TO YOUR LONG-LOST OLDER BROTHER?

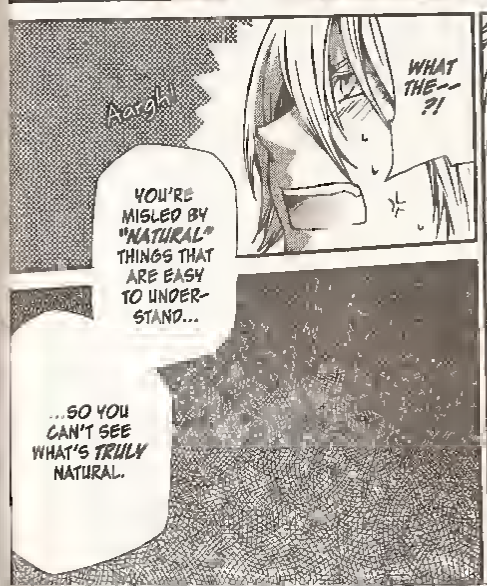
ALWAYS SO CLOSE TO YOU...
CLOSE TO YOU, JUST LIKE BEFORE.
THAT'S WHY YOU DON'T GET IT.

WHOA !!
WHAT ON EARTH ARE YOU TALKING ABOUT?
WAIT!
...?

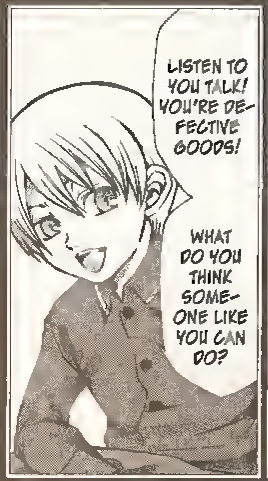
YOU MUST'VE FORGOT-TEN. YOU MUST BE STUPID.
OR CAN'T YOU TELL, EVEN IF THEY LOOK THE SAME?


IF SOMEONE LOOKS THE SAME, THEN OF COURSE IT'S THE SAME PERSON, RIGHT?
? YOU'RE WEIRD.
THERE'S NO WAY HE'D STILL BE A LITTLE KID LIKE YOU.
IT'S BEEN MORE THAN TEN YEARS SINCE I'VE SEEN MY BROTHER.
OLDER BROTH-ER? YOU MUST BE KIDDING.

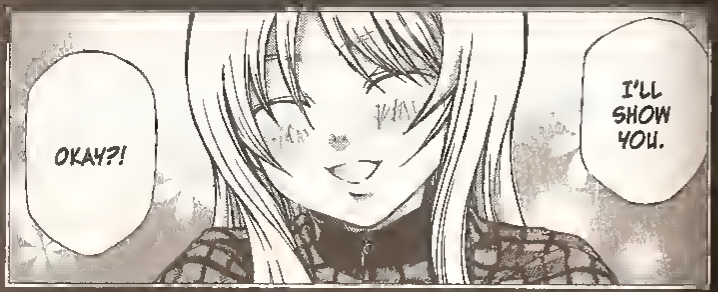
ONLY NATURAL?
...who gets offended by a little kid!
A 2hr recital
LIVING THINGS GROW OLDER! IT'S ONLY NATURAL!
Argh!!
YOU'RE THE ONE WHO'S STUPID.


Argh!
WHAT THE--?!
YOU'RE MISLED BY "NATURAL" THINGS THAT ARE EASY TO UNDER-STAND...
...SO YOU CAN'T SEE WHAT'S TRULY NATURAL.

YES, ONLY NATURAL.
I FEEL SORRY FOR YOU.
YOU REALLY ARE STUPID.


LISTEN TO YOU TALK! YOU'RE DEFECTIVE GOODS!
WHAT DO YOU THINK SOMEONE LIKE YOU CAN DO?

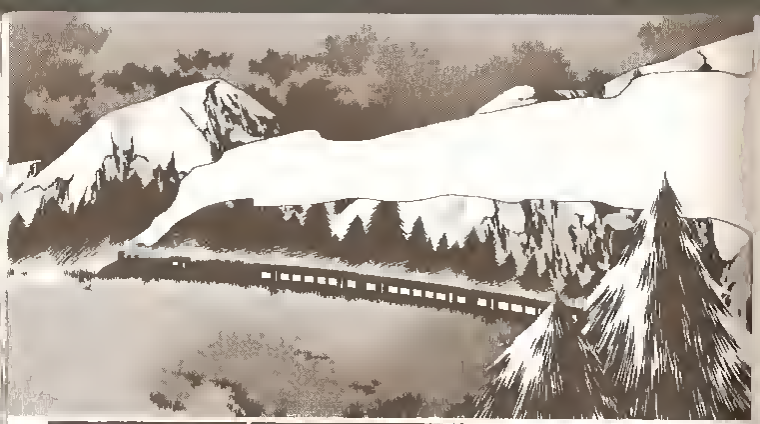
ONE DAY I'LL SHOW YOU A MOUSE AND THE SKY.
I'LL SHOW YOU EVERYTHING YOU'VE NEVER SEEN BEFORE.

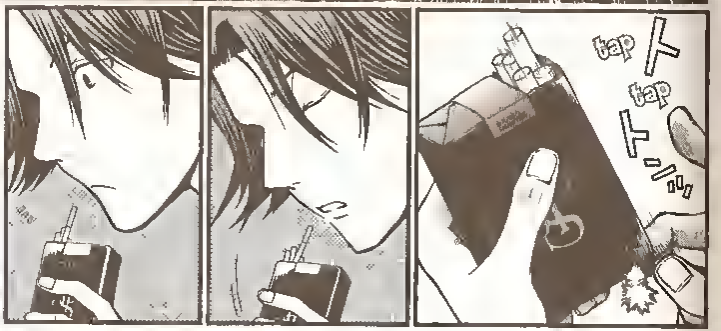

OKAY?!
I'LL SHOW YOU.

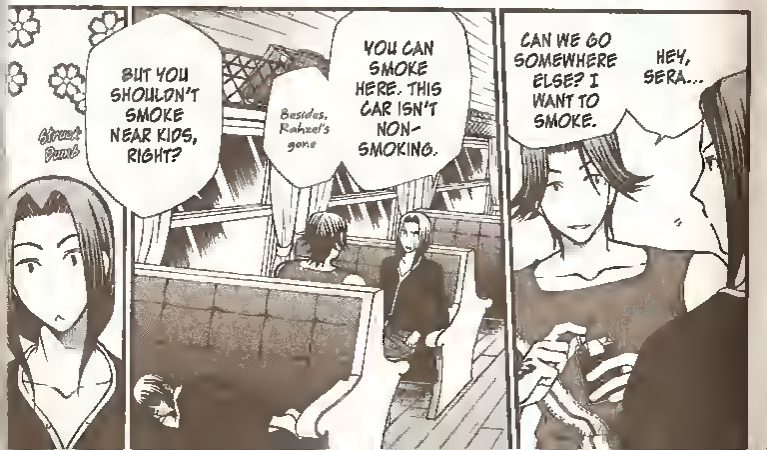
I'LL GO SEE WHAT'S GOING ON.
WHAT HAPPENED? AN ACCIDENT?
WAS THERE SOMETHING ON THE TRACKS?

I WON'T LET YOU INTERFERE.
I TOLD YOU, I CAME TO KEEP YOU HERE.
WHAT ARE YOU DOING, KIARA?
I'M NOT LETTING YOU GO.
Like a molester.
You've got some nerve.

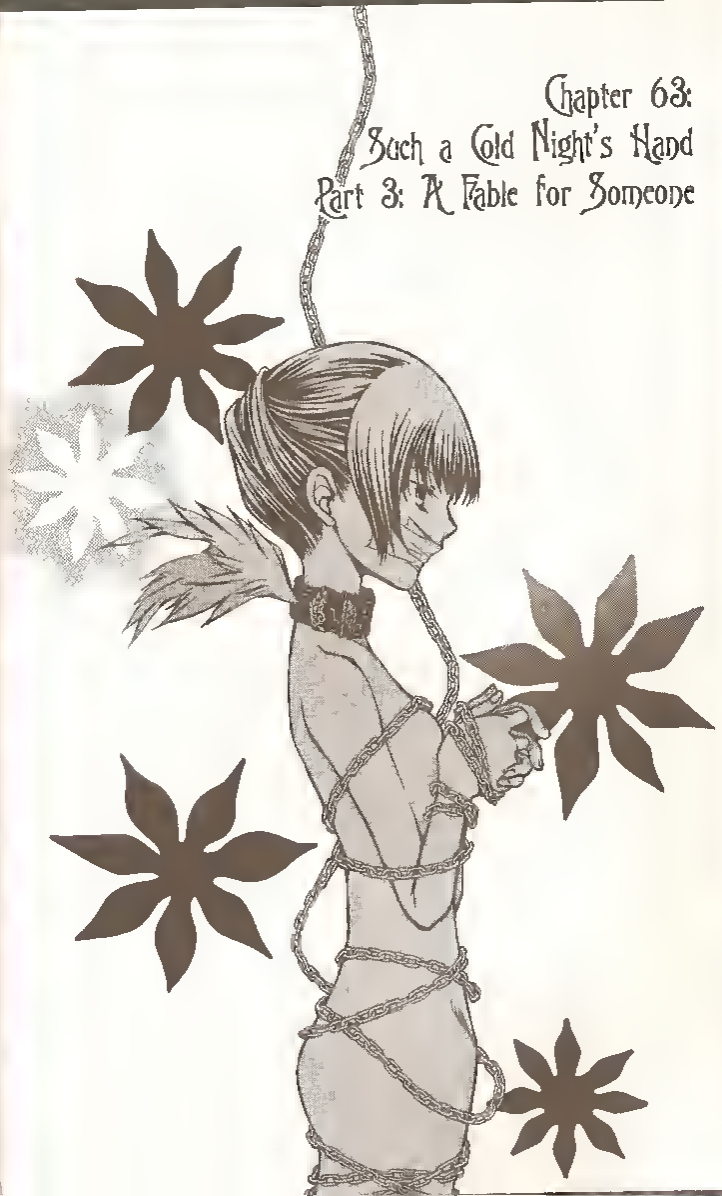
I PLAN TO HAVE THE TWO ALZEIDS...
...KILL EACH OTHER HOWEVER THEY LIKE.



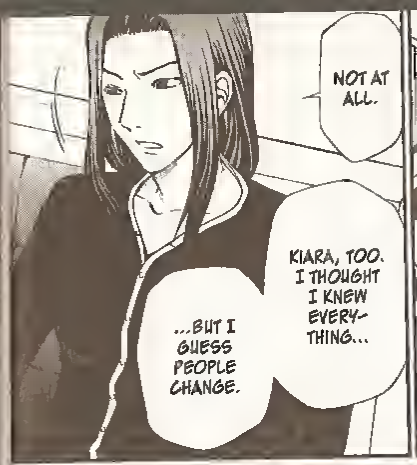



Street Punk
BUT YOU SHOULDN'T SMOKE NEAR KIDS, RIGHT?
Besides, Rahzel's gone
YOU CAN SMOKE HERE. THIS CAR ISN'T NON-SMOKING.
CAN WE GO SOMEWHERE ELSE? I WANT TO SMOKE.
HEY, SERA...

Chapter 63: Such a Cold Night's Hand Part 3: A Fable for Someone

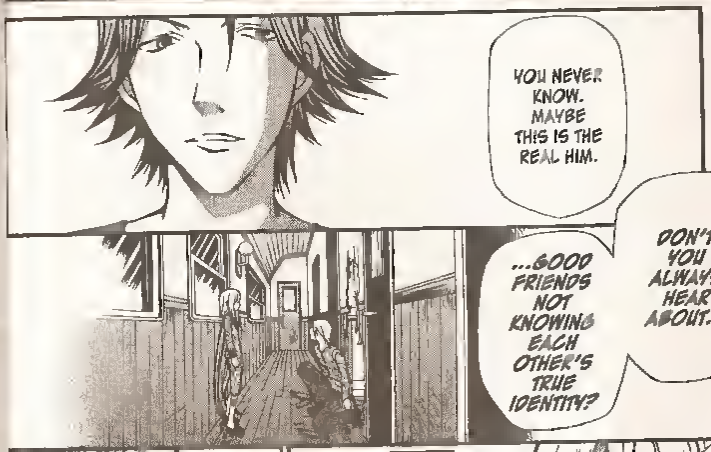


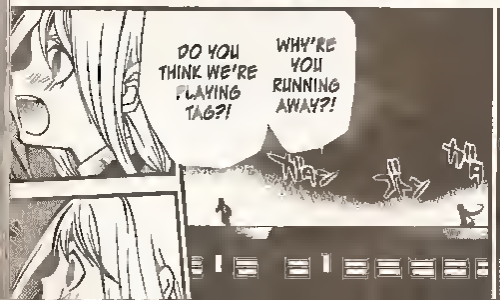
NOT GOOD
I DON'T WANT PEOPLE GETTING IN-VOLVED.
Oh no!
WE MUST NOTIFY THE MANAGER!!
DARLING, THE WORD IS CONDUC-TOR.
That isn't a cabaret club!
WHAT'S GOING ON AROUND HERE?
Huh?
OH, YOU'RE INJURED?


NOT AT ALL.
KIARA, TOO. I THOUGHT I KNEW EVERY-THING...
...BUT I GUESS PEOPLE CHANGE.

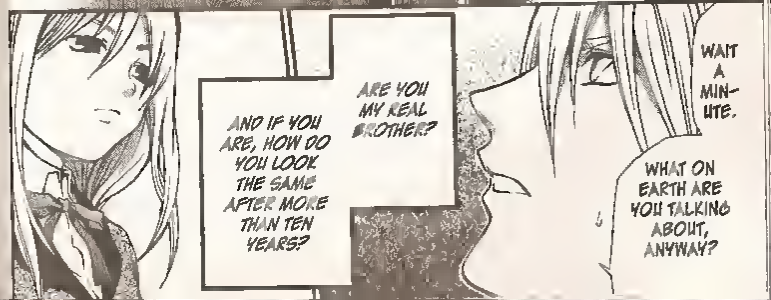
WH-WHEN DID YOU BECOME SUCH A NICE GUY?
OH? WASN'T I NICE BEFORE?

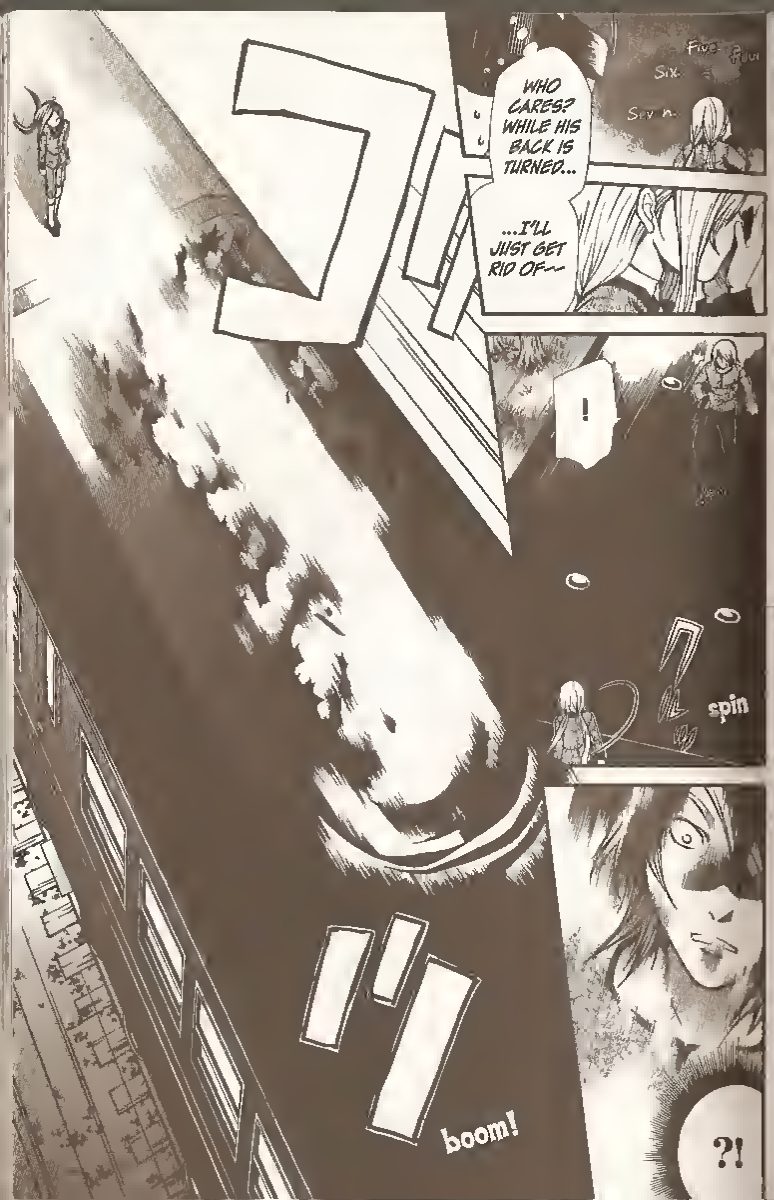
OH!
OH!
THIS WAY, IDIOT!!
OOOOH!!


YOU NEVER KNOW. MAYBE THIS IS THE REAL HIM.
DON'T YOU ALWAYS HEAR ABOUT...
...GOOD FRIENDS NOT KNOWING EACH OTHER'S TRUE IDENTITY?

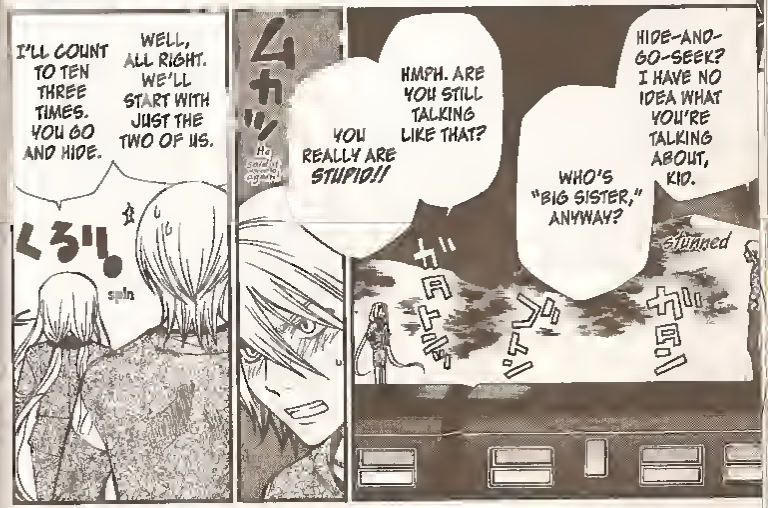

DO YOU THINK WE'RE PLAYING TAG?!
WHY'RE YOU RUNNING AWAY?!

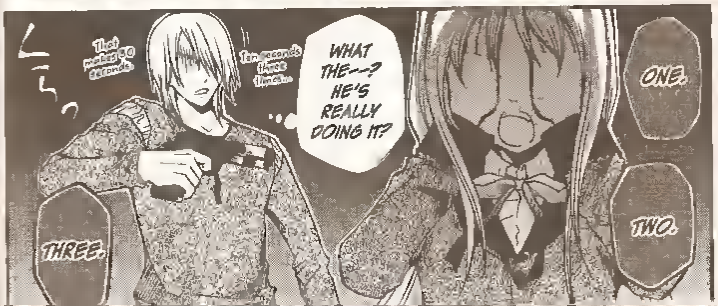
leap
WHERE ARE YOU GOING? WAIT.


AND IF YOU ARE, HOW DO YOU LOOK THE SAME AFTER MORE THAN TEN YEARS?
ARE YOU MY REAL BROTHER?
WAIT A MIN-UTE.
WHAT ON EARTH ARE YOU TALKING ABOUT, ANYWAY?


WHO CARES? WHILE HIS BACK IS TURNED...
...I'LL JUST GET RID OF--
Five
Six
Seven
!
spin
boom!
?!

YOU WANT TO FINISH THE GAME OF HIDE-AND-GO-SEEK WE WERE PLAYING BACK THEN?!
THERE WERE THREE OF US PLAYING!!
IF SO, WE HAVE TO GET BIG SISTER TOO!!
OH, WE ARE PLAYING TAG!!

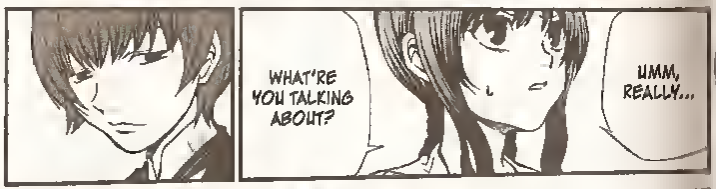

I'LL COUNT TO TEN THREE TIMES. YOU GO AND HIDE.
WELL, ALL RIGHT. WE'LL START WITH JUST THE TWO OF US.
くるり
spin
He said it again.
YOU REALLY ARE STUPID!!
HMPH. ARE YOU STILL TALKING LIKE THAT?
WHO'S "BIG SISTER," ANYWAY?
HIDE-AND-GO-SEEK? I HAVE NO IDEA WHAT YOU'RE TALKING ABOUT, KID.
Stunned


That marked 30 seconds.
Ten seconds have times...
WHAT THE--? HE'S REALLY DOING IT?
ONE.
TWO.
THREE.

BUT WHAT IF THE OLDER BROTHER HAD THE CHARACTERISTICS...
...BUT JUST PRETENDED NOT TO HAVE THEM?
WHAT IF HE HAD GREATER ABILITIES...
...THAN THE YOUNGER BROTHER WHO LOOKED DOWN ON HIM?

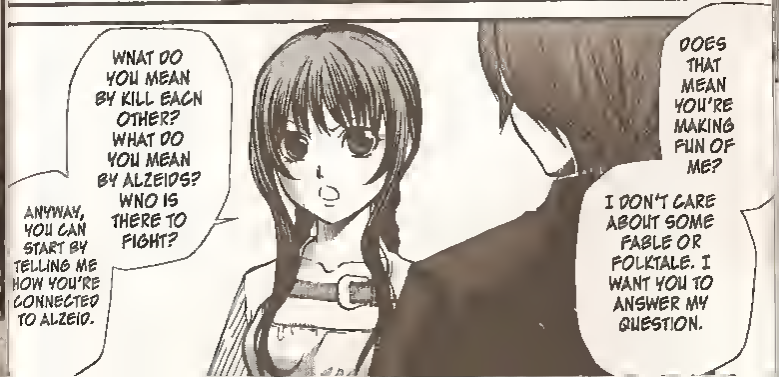
...BECAUSE THE YOUNGER BROTHER...
...WAS MADE AS A REPLACEMENT FOR A DEFECTIVE ITEM THAT DIDN'T HAVE THE DESIRED CHARACTERISTICS.
HEY! ARE YOU GOING TO TOTALLY IGNORE ME?

WHY DON'T YOU GO AND HIDE?
STUPID!
ONCE UPON A TIME, THERE WERE TWO BROTHERS.


WHAT'RE YOU TALKING ABOUT?
UMM, REALLY...

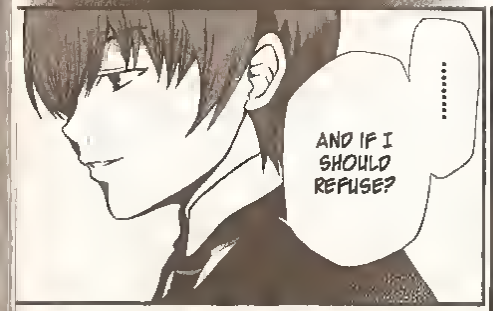
THE YOUNGER BROTHER MADE FUN OF THE OLDER BROTHER...
THE OLDER BROTHER WAS A LITTLE SLOW, BUT THE YOUNGER BROTHER DID WELL IN EVERYTHING.

AND THINK THEY'RE REALLY POWERFUL...
PEOPLE WHO UNDERESTIMATE OTHERS...
...WITHOUT KNOWING THEIR TRUE ABILITIES...
slide


WHAT DO YOU MEAN BY KILL EACH OTHER? WHAT DO YOU MEAN BY ALZEIDS? WHO IS THERE TO FIGHT?
ANYWAY, YOU CAN START BY TELLING ME HOW YOU'RE CONNECTED TO ALZEID.
DOES THAT MEAN YOU'RE MAKING FUN OF ME?
I DON'T CARE ABOUT SOME FABLE OR FOLKTALE. I WANT YOU TO ANSWER MY QUESTION.

WHY DON'T YOU WANT RAHZEL TO SEE ME?!
YOU TAKE IT EASY AND SMOKE YOUR CIGARETTE OR SOMETHING.
I CAN HANDLE IT.
M-ME TOO!!
I'M GOING TO SEE HOW RAHZEL'S DOING.

I SEE NOW THAT YOU HAVE NO INTENTION OF HAVING A DECENT CONVERSATION WITH ME.

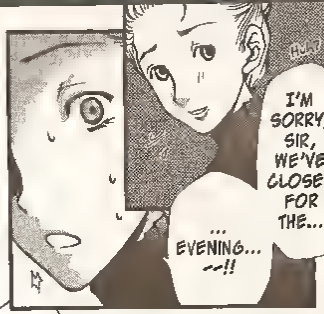

AND IF I SHOULD REFUSE?
.....

I'LL USE BRUTE FORCE.

Heh heh
I'M HURT! I'M BEING PERFECTLY SERIOUS.
SORRY, BUT YOUR SERIOUSNESS ISN'T COMING ACROSS AT ALL.
NOW GET OUT OF MY WAY. I HAVE NOTHING MORE TO SAY TO YOU.

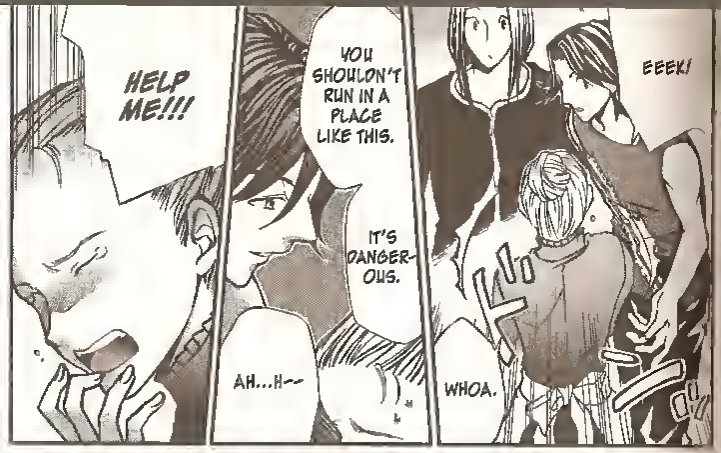
boom!

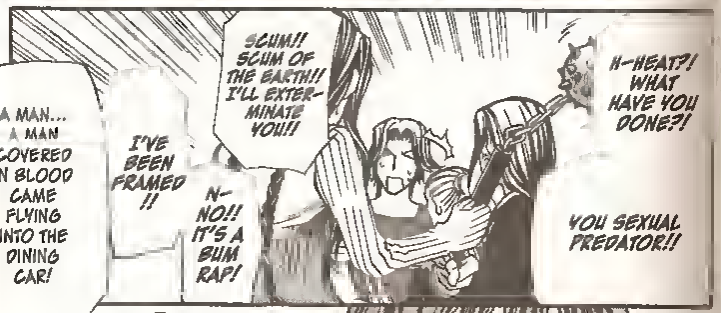
WH-WHAT'S HAPPENED?
HOW SHOULD I KNOW?!!

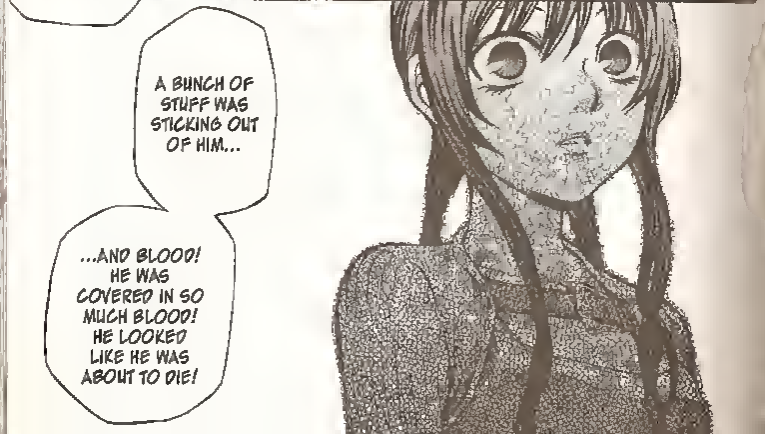

Huh?
I'M SORRY, SIR, WE'VE CLOSED FOR THE...
... EVENING... ~-!!

AAAAAH!!
...ARE QUITE COMICAL. THAT'S WHAT THE STORY'S ABOUT.

I SEE.
Phew!
TALKING WITH SOMEONE?! NO, I WAS TALKING TO MYSELF.
I JUST LOOKED OUTSIDE TO SEE WHAT'S GOING ON.
AND COULD YOU SEE ANYTHING?
I GUESS I CAN'T SEE ANYTHING WRONG.
OPEN THIS DOOR!!
IS SOMEBODY IN THERE WITH YOU, RAHZEL?
ANSWER ME!!
Bam Bam
I SEE. THAT'S TOO BAD.
RAHZEL!!
OH?
OH DEAR.
I GUESS MY TIME IS UP.
F-FATHER?!
WAIT...I'M COMING!!
RAHZEL!!
SEE YOU LATER, RAHZEL.
F-FATHER, WHAT'S UP?
WERE YOU JUST TALKING TO SOMEONE?
WHA--
WHAT'S HAPPENED?!
OVER WHERE?
GOOD!! NICE ESCAPE, KIARA!!
It's actually all your fault
REALLY?
THERE'S TOTAL DEVASTATION OVER THERE.


HELP ME!!!
YOU SHOULDN'T RUN IN A PLACE LIKE THIS.
IT'S DANGEROUS.
AH...H--
WHOA.
EEEK!

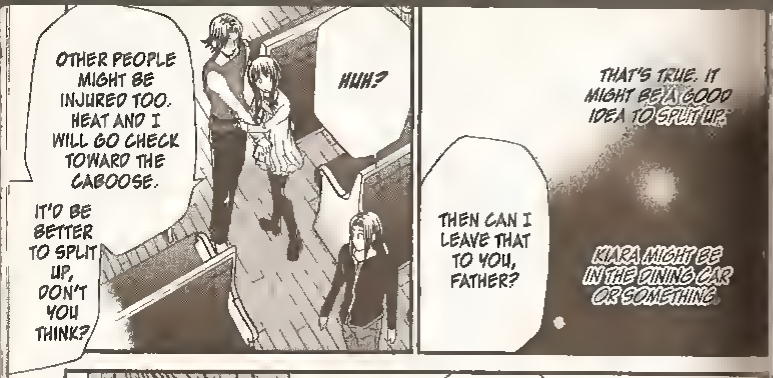

SCUM!! SCUM OF THE EARTH!! I'LL EXTERMINATE YOU!!
I'VE BEEN FRAMED!!
N-NO!! IT'S A BUM RAP!
H-HEAT?! WHAT HAVE YOU DONE?!
YOU SEXUAL PREDATOR!!

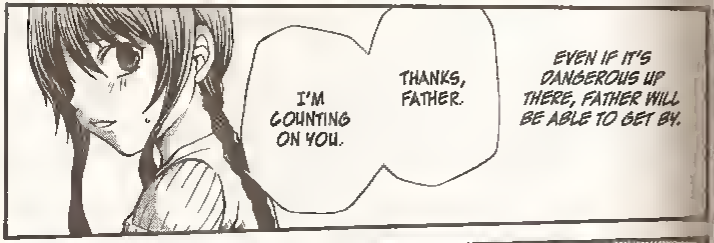

A MAN... A MAN COVERED IN BLOOD CAME FLYING INTO THE DINING CAR!
A BUNCH OF STUFF WAS STICKING OUT OF HIM...
...AND BLOOD! HE WAS COVERED IN SO MUCH BLOOD! HE LOOKED LIKE HE WAS ABOUT TO DIE!

NO WAY.
I'LL GO SEE WHAT'S UP.
PUT THE BREAKS ON ANYWAY.
HOW SHOULD I KNOW?

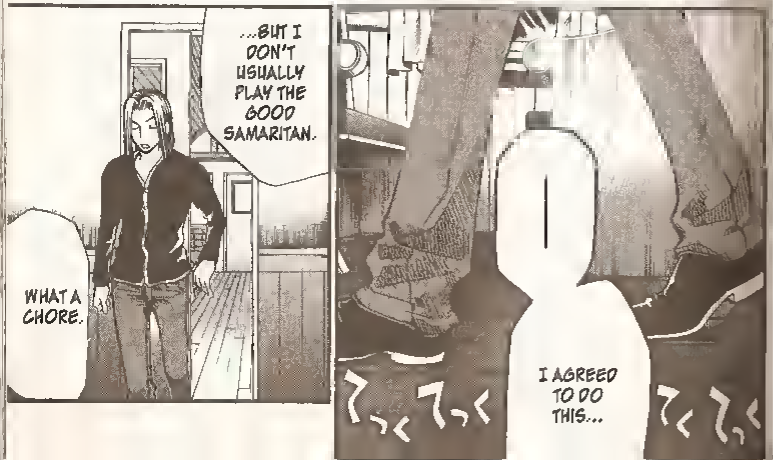
yank
DON'T YOU AGREE?
YOU CAN'T STOP. THE PASSENGERS WOULD BE ANNOYED BY THE DELAY, RIGHT?

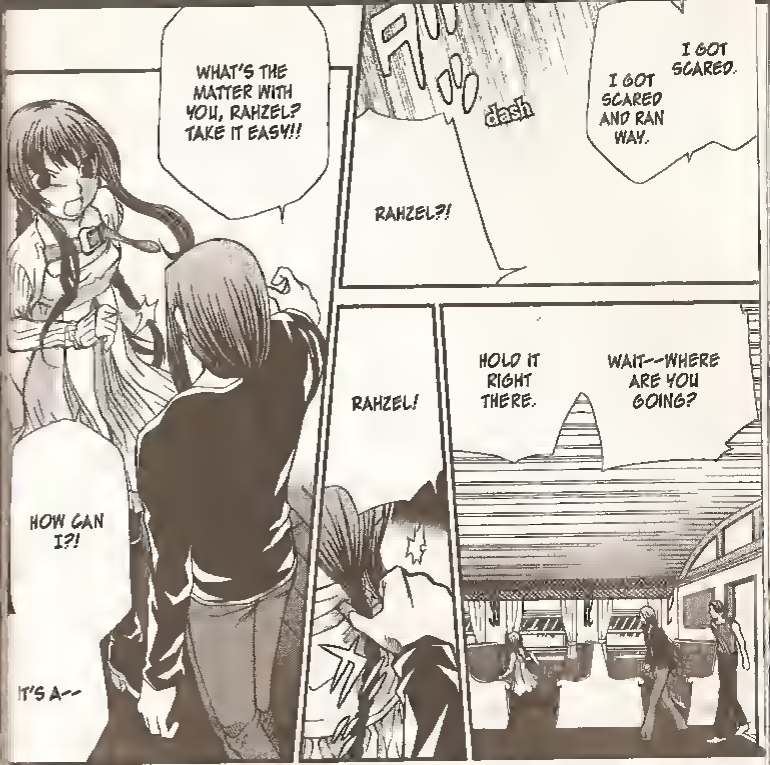
WOW. WHAT THE--?
BUT WITH SOMETHING LIKE THIS, WOULDN'T THEY NORMALLY--
BUT WE'RE STILL MOVING. DOES THAT MEAN THAT THERE'S NO PROBLEM WITH THE TRAIN?
IT'S RIPPED OFF ALL THE WAY TO THE NEXT CAR.
d-sh
d-sh

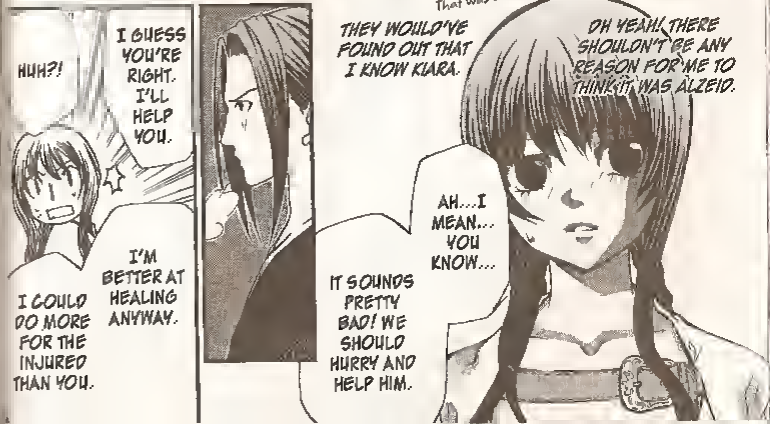

OTHER PEOPLE MIGHT BE INJURED TOO. HEAT AND I WILL GO CHECK TOWARD THE CABOOSE.
HUH?
IT'D BE BETTER TO SPLIT UP, DON'T YOU THINK?
THAT'S TRUE. IT MIGHT BE A GOOD IDEA TO SPLIT UP.
THEN CAN I LEAVE THAT TO YOU, FATHER?
KIARA MIGHT BE IN THE DINING CAR OR SOMETHING

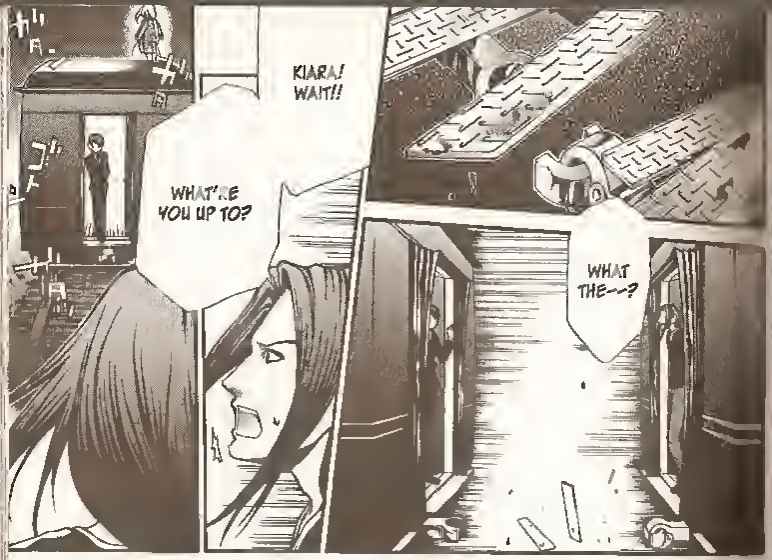

I'M COUNTING ON YOU.
THANKS, FATHER.
EVEN IF IT'S DANGEROUS UP THERE, FATHER WILL BE ABLE TO GET BY.

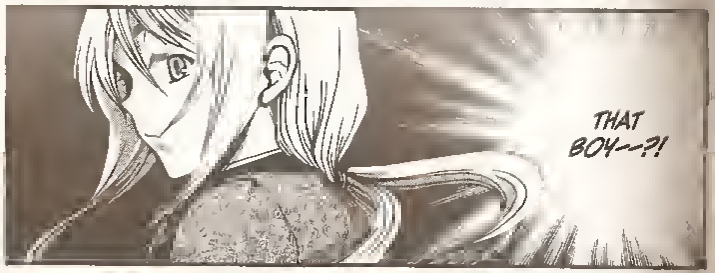
overreacting.
She's really...
UH-HUH?
?

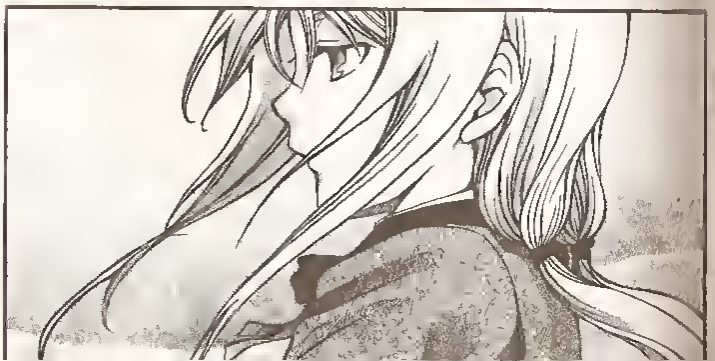

...BUT I DON'T USUALLY PLAY THE GOOD SAMARITAN.
WHAT A CHORE.
I AGREED TO DO THIS...


WHAT'S THE MATTER WITH YOU, RAHZEL? TAKE IT EASY!!
HOW CAN I?!
IT'S A--
RAHZEL?!
dash
I GOT SCARED.
I GOT SCARED AND RAN WAY.
RAHZEL!
HOLD IT RIGHT THERE.
WAIT--WHERE ARE YOU GOING?

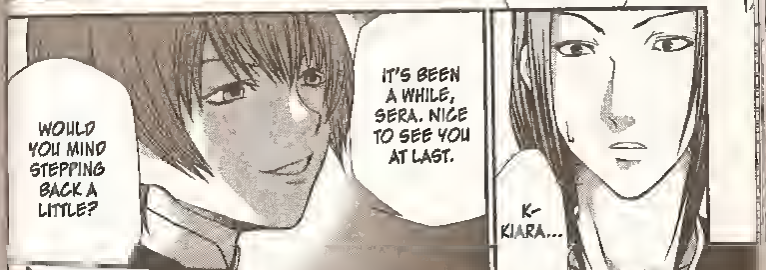

HUH?!
I GUESS YOU'RE RIGHT. I'LL HELP YOU.
I'M BETTER AT HEALING ANYWAY.
I COULD DO MORE FOR THE INJURED THAN YOU.
That was close
THEY WOULD'VE FOUND OUT THAT I KNOW KIARA.
OH YEAH! THERE SHOULDN'T BE ANY REASON FOR ME TO THINK IT WAS ALZEID.
AH...I MEAN... YOU KNOW...
IT SOUNDS PRETTY BAD! WE SHOULD HURRY AND HELP HIM.

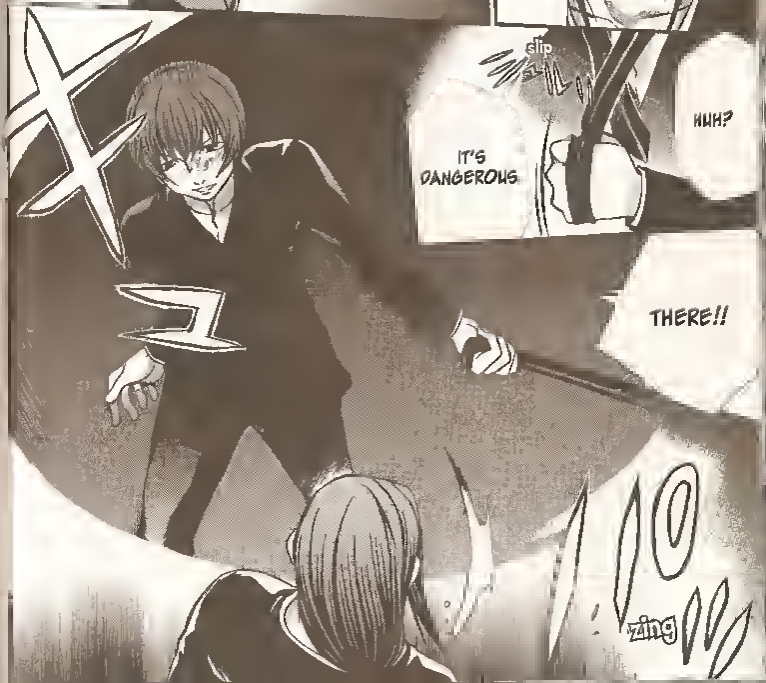

KIARA! WAIT!!
WHAT'RE YOU UP TO?
WHAT THE--?


THAT BOY--?!



HEY.
WELL...
I'LL DO WHAT I PROMISED, BUT...

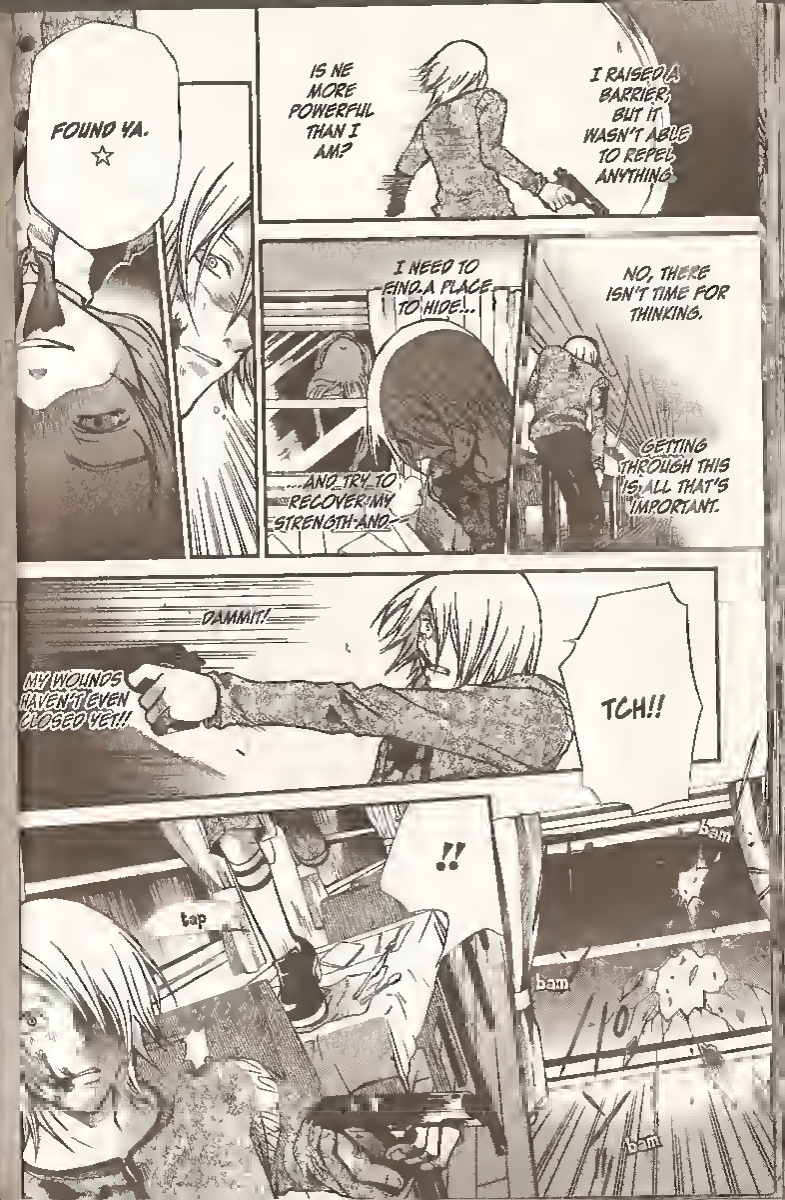

WOULD YOU MIND STEPPING BACK A LITTLE?
IT'S BEEN A WHILE, SERA. NICE TO SEE YOU AT LAST.
K-KIARA...


slip
IT'S DANGEROUS
HUH?
THERE!!
10
zing

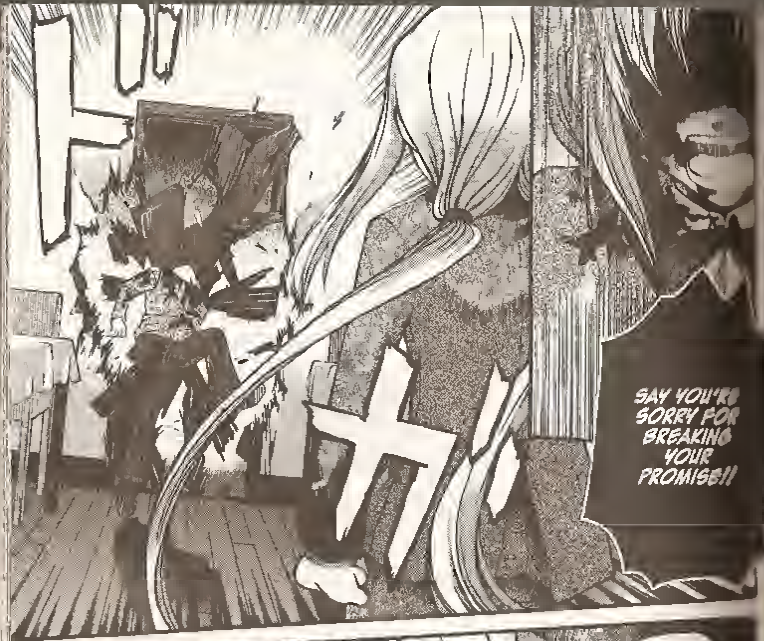
WHAT THE HECK WAS THAT?
Huff...
Huff
Gasp!
Huff
Yank
GWAAH!
GAAAH...
OOF...
Huff...
HE WAS A TOTAL SCREWUP. HE COULDN'T EVEN USE MAGIC OR ANYTHING
WASN'T I CREATED BECAUSE HE WAS A FAILURE?
Wheeze...

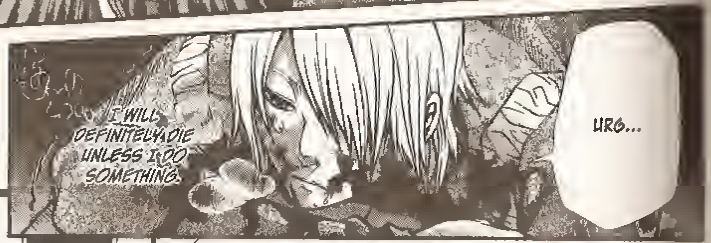
HAVE A NICE TRIP.
BYE-BYE, BIG BROTHER.
Huff...
Huff
Hyuff...
Huff

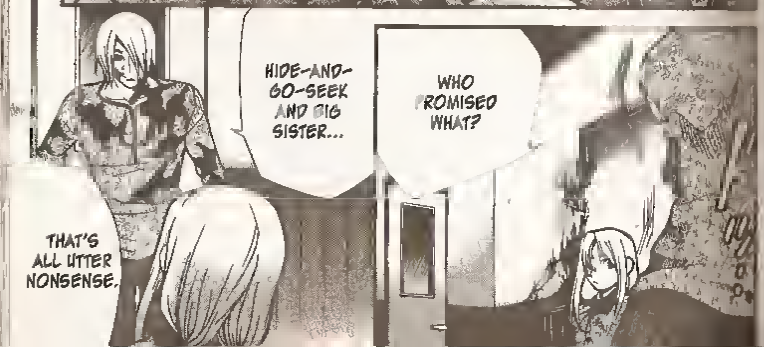
click
click
THIS TIMING SUCKS!
GAH!!
fwip
grab


FOUND YA.
IS HE MORE POWERFUL THAN I AM?
I RAISED A BARRIER, BUT IT WASN'T ABLE TO REPEL ANYTHING.
I NEED TO FIND A PLACE TO HIDE...
...AND TRY TO RECOVER MY STRENGTH AND...
NO, THERE ISN'T TIME FOR THINKING.
GETTING THROUGH THIS IS ALL THAT'S IMPORTANT.
DAMMIT!
MY WOUNDS HAVEN'T EVEN CLOSED YET!!
TCH!!
!!
tap
bam
bam
bam

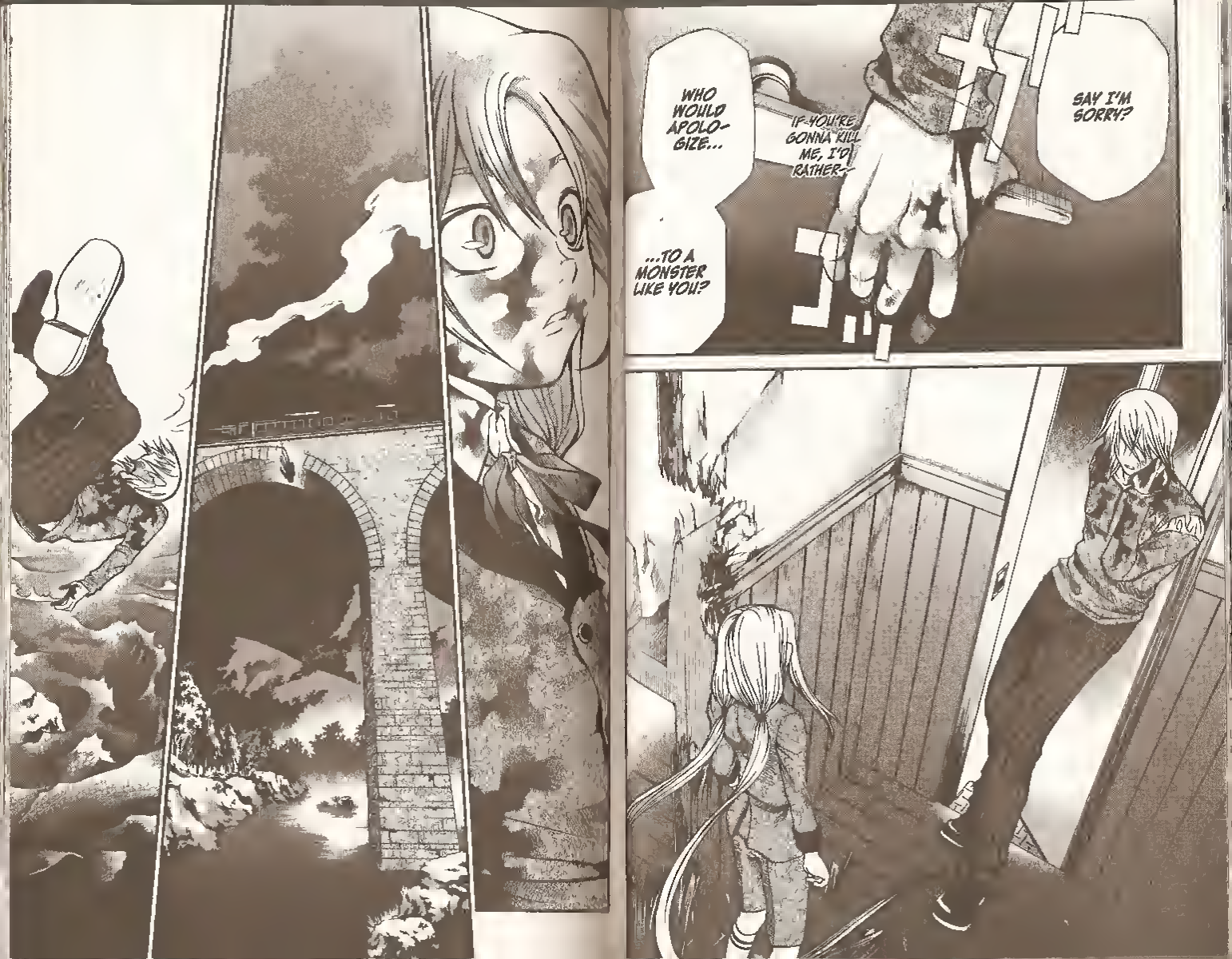
110
slice
...BUT IN CLOSE COMBAT, BEING BIGGER, I SHOULD HAVE THE UPPER HAND.
MAYBE I CAN'T WIN WITH MAGIC...
WH-WHA--
WHAT?!!
flip
clank
creak
HAH...
huff...
gasp.
AR-ARGH!
AAARGH!
AAARGH!
spurt
AH...
GAH...



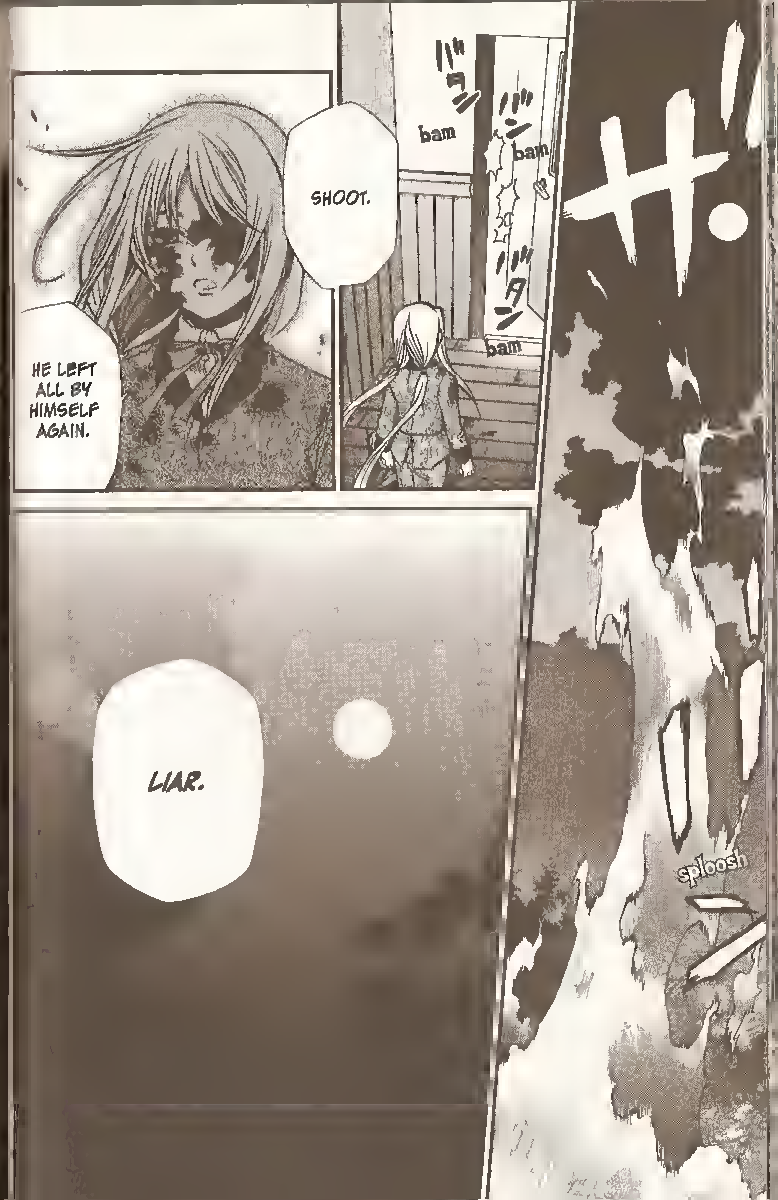




SAY YOU'RE SORRY YOU LEFT.
SAY YOU'RE SORRY FOR FORGETTING YOUR OLDER BROTHER.
SAY YOU'RE SORRY FOR KEEPING BIG SISTER ALL FOR YOURSELF.
SAY IT!!
dadadad


SAY I'M SORRY?
IF YOU'RE GONNA KILL ME, I'D RATHER--
WHO WOULD APOLO-GIZE...
...TO A MONSTER LIKE YOU?

YOU KNOW MY FATHER WOULDN'T ALLOW IT.
I KNOW.
SO WE'LL SNEAK OUT.
HAVEN'T YOU EVER SEEN THE SKY?
THEN MAYBE WE CAN GO SEE IT TOGETHER.
twitch
YOU CAN'T GO!!
OOOF!
WE PROM-ISED!!
THAT'S RIGHT!! I SAID IT FIRST.
YOU WERE GOING TO SHOW YOUR LITTLE BROTHER.
OH, THAT'S RIGHT I'M SORRY.
I...
I...
NO...IT'S OKAY.
YOU CAN DO IT, BIG SISTER.


SHOOT.
HE LEFT ALL BY HIMSELF AGAIN.
bam
bam
bam
LIAR.
splosh

HA HA HA HA HA! I'M ALIVE!
HA HA HA HA HA!
I'M STILL ALIVE! THAT'LL SHOW YOU!
HA ...
HA HA...
HA...
HAH...
I'M STILL ...
... STILL ALIVE!
I GUESS I'M QUITE THE MONSTER MYSELF.
THAT DEEP GASH HAS ALREADY HEALED.
HA HA..
YOU CAN'T KILL ME JUST BY CUTTING MY JUGULAR.
BUT HE WAS AN EVEN BIGGER MONSTER.
I WAS COMPLETELY HELPLESS.

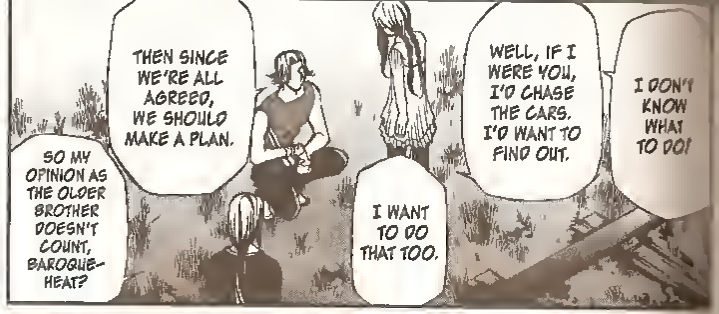
IF WE ALL SEE IT TOGETHER, IT'S OKAY.
IF YOU PROMISE, IT'S OKAY.
triumph
ZOOM

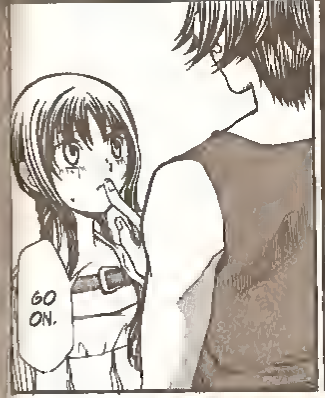
Chapter 64:
Such a Good Night's Hand
Part 4: Fate Unknown

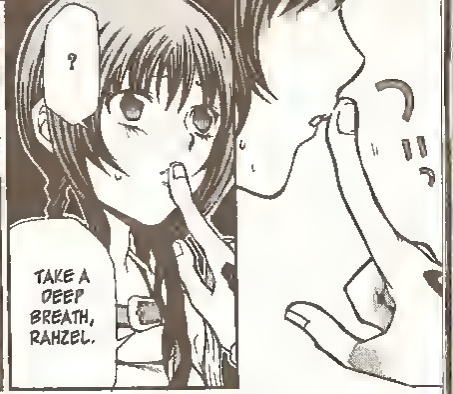
WHAT A MESS.
MAYBE THEY'LL GIVE US A TEN PERCENT FINDER'S FEE.
HUH. WHAT'S THIS?
I CAME TO CHECK OUT SOME STRANGE LAUGHTER AND LOOK

BUT ALZEID IS SOMEWHERE IN THE OTHER CARS!
HE MIGHT BE GRAVELY WOUNDED AND WAITING FOR US!!
LEMME GO!!
CALM DOWN.
WHAT'S THE MATTER WITH YOU? IS SOMETHING GOING ON?
WAIT JUST A MINUTE
YOU STILL DON'T KNOW FOR SURE.
WHAT IS IT?
OR IS THERE SOME REASON THAT YOU'RE CERTAIN?
NO! HE IS THERE!!
HE ISN'T IN ANY OF THE CARS HERE. WE'VE SEARCHED!
DON'T YOU MEAN...
...HE MIGHT BE THERE?
WHAT DO I DO? I CAN'T TELL THEM THAT KIARA TOLD ME.
WELL, I...
I PLAN TO HAVE THE TWO KILL EACH OTHER.

WE'RE VERY SORRY!!
WE'LL TRY TO CONTACT THE STATION AND GET AN ENGINE HERE AS SOON AS POSSIBLE.
I'M SORRY, BUT RIGHT NOW, I REALLY DON'T KNOW.
SO HOW LONG WILL WE HAVE TO WAIT?
THAT'S YOUR STORY?
SO, FATHER, WHEN YOU GOT THERE, THE CAR WAS ALREADY DISCONNECTED?
RAHZEL?!
...ARGH.
I'M SORRY.
AND THE INJURED PERSON WAS IN A FORWARD CAR, SO I COULDN'T HELP HIM.
THAT'S RIGHT.
THO-UGH IT'S A LIE.

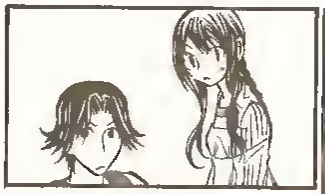

I DON'T KNOW WHAT TO DO!
WELL, IF I WERE YOU, I'D CHASE THE CARS. I'D WANT TO FIND OUT.
I WANT TO DO THAT TOO.
THEN SINCE WE'RE ALL AGREED, WE SHOULD MAKE A PLAN.
SO MY OPINION AS THE OLDER BROTHER DOESN'T COUNT, BAROQUE-HEAT?

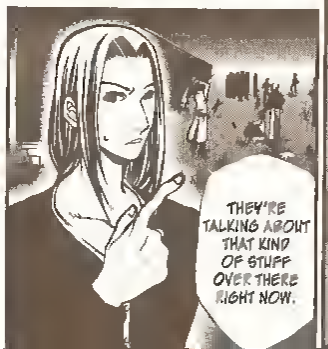

GO ON.

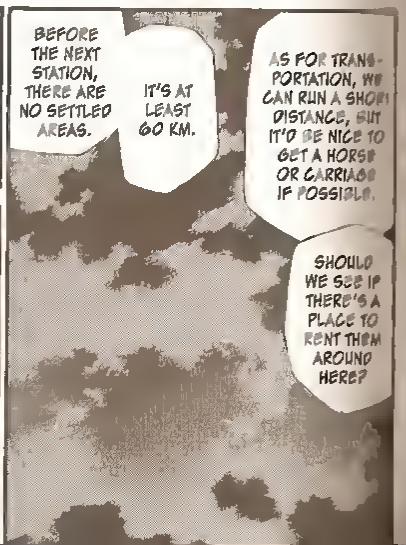

?
TAKE A DEEP BREATH, RAHZEL.
!!

WE SHOULD START BY FOLLOWING THE TRACKS TO THE NEXT STATION
UH-HUH.
Well...
IF THE CAR STOPPED ALONG THE WAY, THAT'LL MAKE THINGS EASY.
WHY?
AND EVEN IF IT DIDN'T, WHEN WE GET TO A FAIRLY BIG STATION, WE CAN ASK THE STATIONMASTER WHEN THE TRAIN PASSED THROUGH.

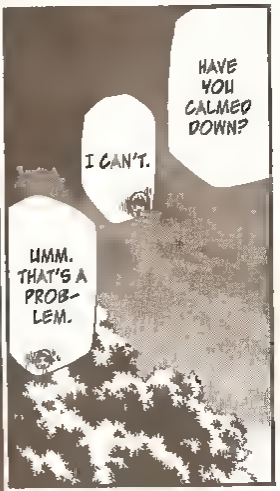
.....
Pheeew.



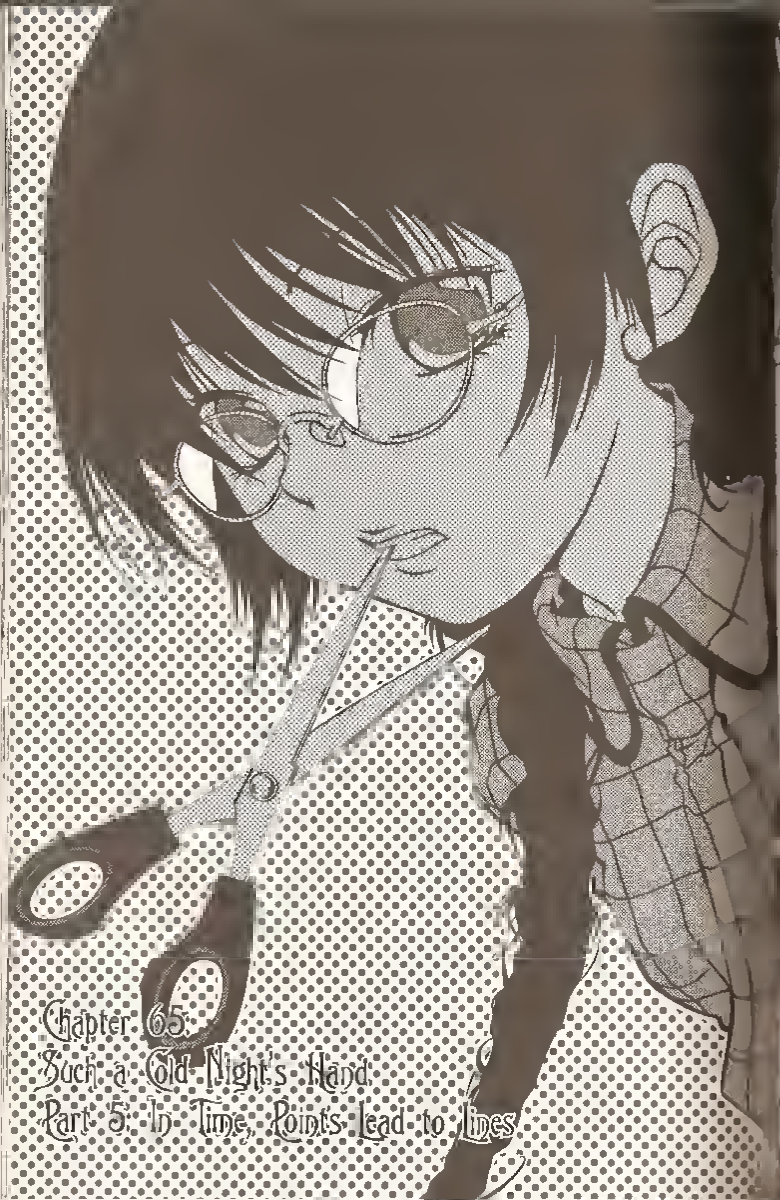

THEY'RE TALKING ABOUT THAT KIND OF STUFF OVER THERE RIGHT NOW.


BEFORE THE NEXT STATION, THERE ARE NO SETTLED AREAS.
IT'S AT LEAST 60 KM.
AS FOR TRANSPORTATION, WE CAN RUN A SHORT DISTANCE, BUT IT'D BE NICE TO GET A HORSE OR CARRIAGE IF POSSIBLE.
SHOULD WE SEE IF THERE'S A PLACE TO RENT THEM AROUND HERE?

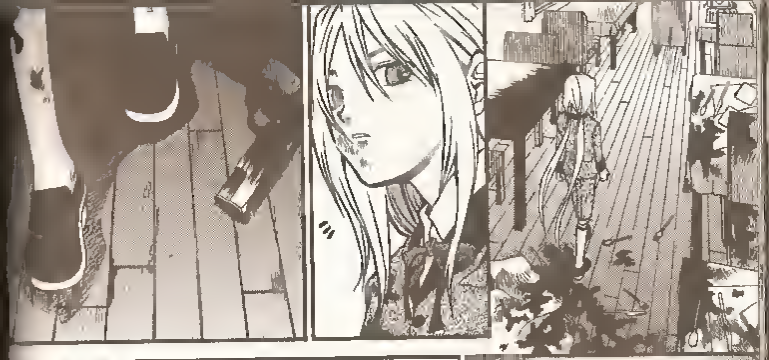
THEN AT LEAST PRETEND YOU'VE CALMED DOWN, AND THINK.
WHAT DO YOU THINK WE SHOULD DO?
SHALL WE WAIT HERE FOR A TOWING CAR OR A NEW ENGINE?
OR SHOULD WE GO AFTER THE MISSING CARS OURSELVES?

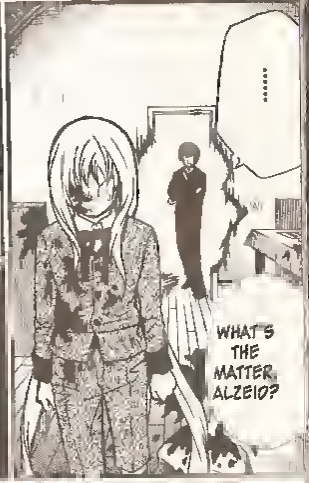

HAVE YOU CALMED DOWN?
I CAN'T.
UMM. THAT'S A PROBLEM.

WELL THEN, IF YOU DON'T MAKE IT, THE PENALTY WILL BE THAT I GET TO CARRY YOU AROUND LIKE A PRINCESS.
CAN YOU MAKE THE PENALTY MORE CASUAL?
That's too weird for my tastes
I'LL SMASH HEAT TO PIECES BEFORE YOU'RE IN ANY REAL DANGER.
DON'T WORRY, RAHZEL.
I SEE. YOU JUST NEED TO GIVE A NUDGE TO HER COMPETITIVE SIDE.
Well well
ARE YOU CHALLENGING ME?
SERA KNOWS WHAT HE'S DOING AFTER ALL.
TOTALLY.
IF YOU LOSE, YOU'LL HAVE TO PAY AN EMBARRASSING PENALTY, YOU KNOW.
MY PLEASURE.
AND OF COURSE THERE'S NO CHANCE YOU'LL DO THE RUNNING, DEAR BROTHER SERA.
BUT I DON'T THINK YOU NEED TO GO TOO, RAHZEL.
BAROQUEHEAT CAN RUN BY HIMSELF AND SEND SOMEONE TO GET US.
OUT OF THE QUESTION.
YOU COULDN'T POSSIBLY COMPETE WITH HIM.
I'M SIMPLY SAYING THAT IT'S MORE EFFICIENT THAT WAY.
DO YOU MEAN THAT I'D GET IN THE WAY, FATHER?
I COULDN'T POSSIBLY RUN LONG DISTANCES IN THESE CLOTHES.
.....
RAHZEL?
I'M GOING TO CHANGE.



Chapter 65: Such a Cold Night's Hand Part 5: In Time, Points Lead to Lines

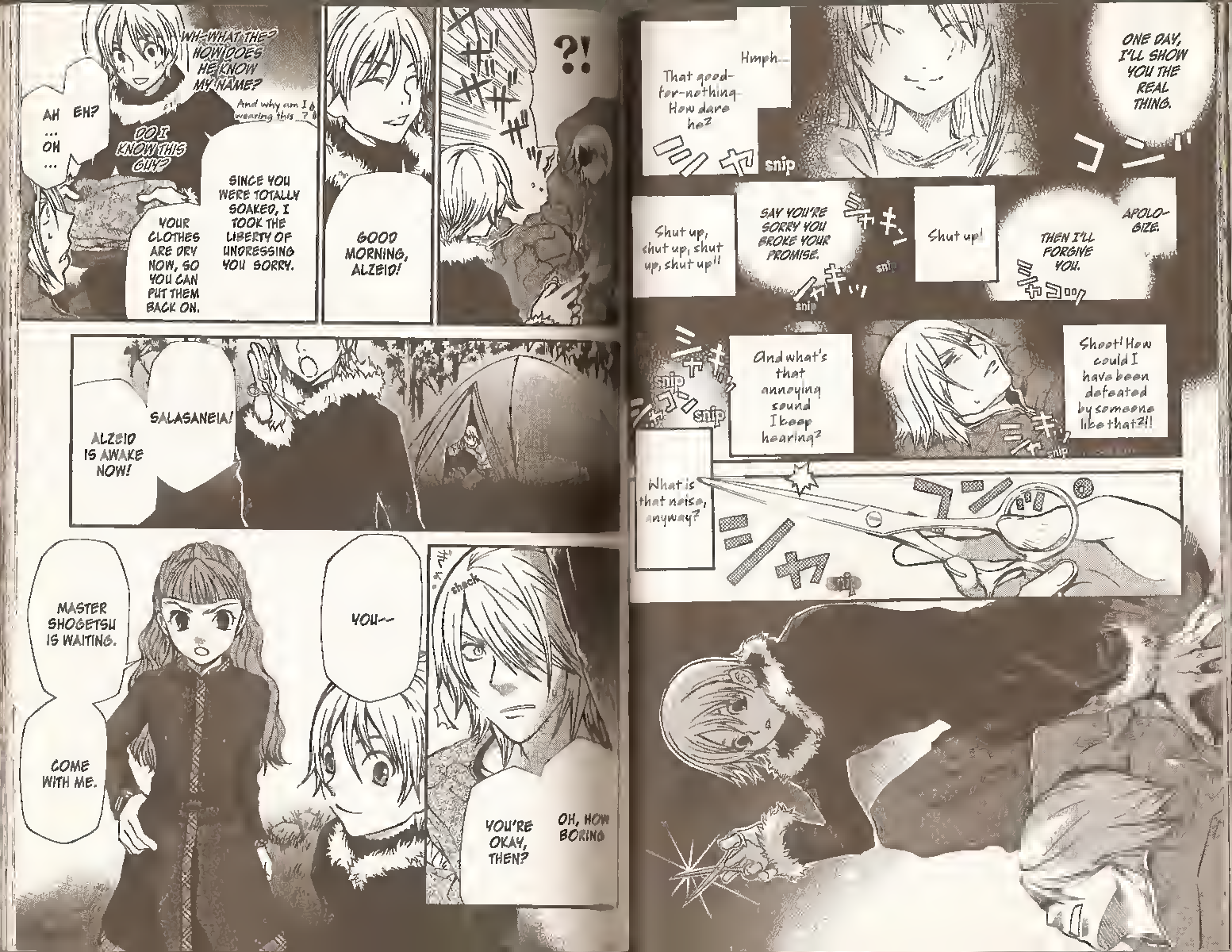


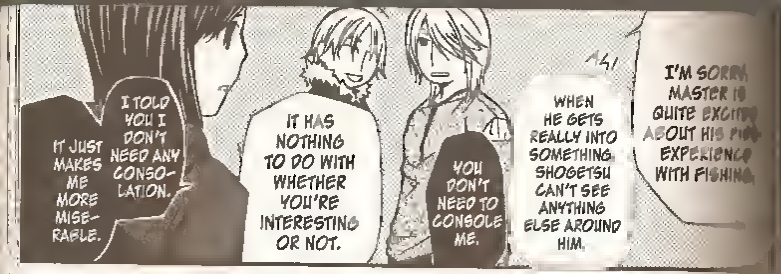


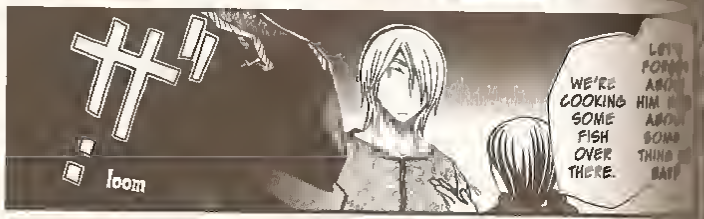
WE KNOW WHERE HE'LL BE STAYING.
AND THE HIGHEST OFFICER OF THIS ASSEMBLY, SIGNORE CARBOVERDE, APPROVED HIS PLAN.
I THINK WE OUGHT TO BRING HIM BACK.
...AND HE'D DISAPPEARED SOMEWHERE RIGHT?
I DON'T THINK HE'LL BE IN ANY DANGER-- EVEN IN THE WORST-CASE SCENARIO.
I'VE ASSIGNED MY MOST TRUSTED SUBORDINATE TO ACCOMPANY HIM.
WHAT DOES SHOGETSU HOPE TO ACHIEVE WITH ALL THIS?
MS. KYNLENN ...
RIGHT, LIEUTENANT GENERAL MELLEBETT?
ON THE CONTRARY, BOTH OF YOU ARE ACTUALLY UNDER MY COMMAND.
JUST TO AVOID ANY MISUNDERSTANDING, CAPTAIN WELLER IS UNDER MY COMMAND
SINCE YOU'RE NO LONGER IN ACTIVE SERVICE, GENERAL AMY KYNLENN, SIR
STOP IT. THIS IS NOT THE PLACE FOR SUCH ARGUMENTS.

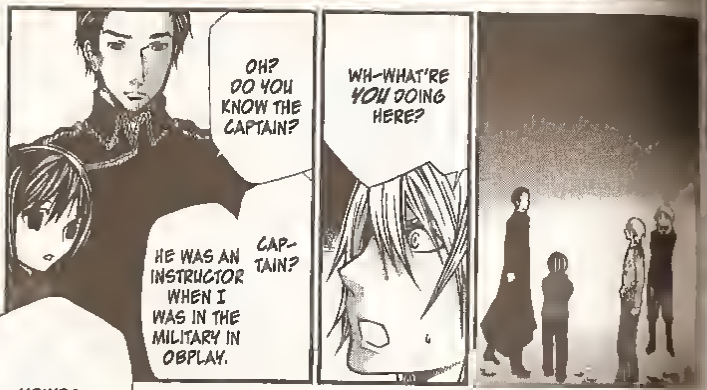
ONLY THREE OF THE SEVEN CHAIRS ARE FULL TONIGHT.
AND ONE OF THEM HAS ALWAYS BEEN EMPTY.
...I WONDER WHAT THE OTHER TWO MEMBERS THINK THIS ASSEMBLY IS.
SO IF ONE OF THE SEATS BELONGS TO SIGNORE CARBOVERDE, WHO'S CURRENTLY IN HIBERNATION...
HEY, HEY, MISS KYNLENN...
YOU'RE IN NO POSITION TO SPEAK FOR THEM.
PERHAPS THEY THOUGHT THIS WASN'T AN IMPORTANT ISSUE, MR. EIZUS.

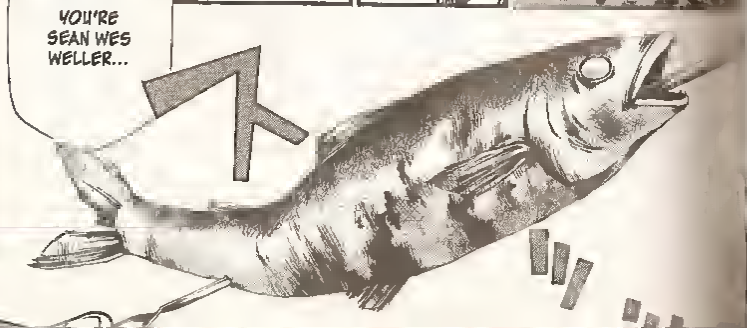
...GET SET...
dash
...GO!!
OF COURSE! I DON'T TAKE YOU SERIOUSLY AT ALL
WELL, WHATEVER. GIVE ME THAT! I'LL CARRY IT FOR YOU
OH, YOU'RE GIVING ME AN ADVANTAGE?
HOW DARE YOU?!
BUT IT'S IN THE WAY. COULD YOU HOLD IT FOR ME?
In the way?!
WHAT A CHORE. I REALLY DON'T WANT TO.
NO COMPLAINING, BIG BRO.
SHALL WE BEGIN OUR 60-KILOMETER MARATHON SEARCH?
NO PROBLEM
ALL RIGHT, QUIET DOWN. STOP TALKING OVER THERE.
ON YOUR MARK ...
COURSE NOT.
THE WEAKLING WHO STOPS PAYS THE PENALTY
DON'T FORGET!
...THE ONE WHO'S BEEN TRAVELING WITH ALZEIO AND THE OTHERS.
YOU MUST BE AWARE OF A GIRL NAMED RAHZEL...
EXCUSE ME, RAHZEL-- I HAVE A QUESTION.
THIS IS EASY TO RUN IN! RELATIVELY SPEAKING...
...OF ALL THE CLOTHES I HAVE ON HAND...
Mumble mumble
Running shirts
"RUNNING OUTFIT" USUALLY MEANS...
...SOMETHING LIKE THIS, NO?


AH EH? ... OH ...
WH-WHAT THE? HOW DOES HE KNOW MY NAME?
DO I KNOW THIS GUY?
And why am I wearing this...?
YOUR CLOTHES ARE DRY NOW, SO YOU CAN PUT THEM BACK ON.
SINCE YOU WERE TOTALLY SOAKED, I TOOK THE LIBERTY OF UNDRESSING YOU. SORRY.
GOOD MORNING, ALZEID!
?!
SALASANEIA!
ALZEID IS AWAKE NOW!
MASTER SHOGETSU IS WAITING.
COME WITH ME.
YOU--
shock
YOU'RE OKAY, THEN?
OH, HOW BORING
That good-for-nothing- How dare he?
Humph...
snip
ONE DAY, I'LL SHOW YOU THE REAL THING.
Shut up, shut up, shut up!!
SAY YOU'RE SORRY YOU BROKE YOUR PROMISE.
Shut up!
THEN I'LL FORGIVE YOU.
APOLOGIZE.
And what's that annoying sound I keep hearing?
Shoot! How could I have been defeated by someone like that?!!
What is that noise, anyway?

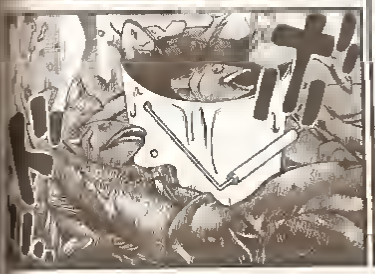

I'M SORRY, MASTER IS QUITE EXCITED ABOUT HIS FISH EXPERIENCE WITH FISHING.
WHEN HE GETS REALLY INTO SOMETHING, SHOGETSU CAN'T SEE ANYTHING ELSE AROUND HIM.
YOU DON'T NEED TO CONSOLE ME.
IT HAS NOTHING TO DO WITH WHETHER YOU'RE INTERESTING OR NOT.
I TOLD YOU I DON'T NEED ANY CONSOLATION.
IT JUST MAKES ME MORE MISERABLE.

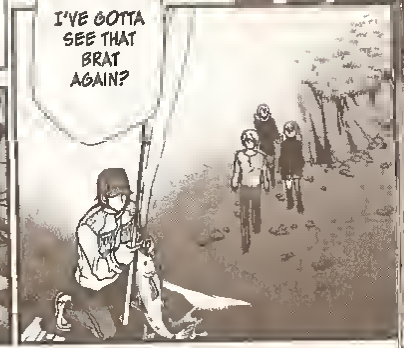

Boom
WE'RE COOKING SOME FISH OVER THERE.

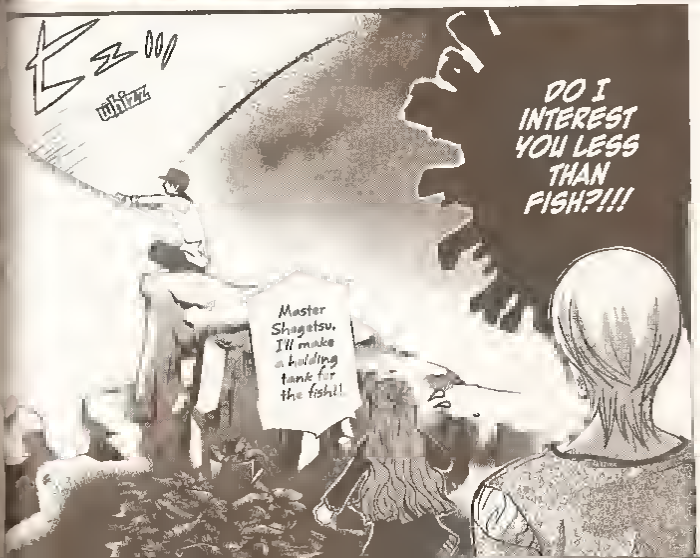

OH? DO YOU KNOW THE CAPTAIN?
CAPTAIN?
HE WAS AN INSTRUCTOR WHEN I WAS IN THE MILITARY IN OBPLAY.
WH-WHAT'RE YOU DOING HERE?

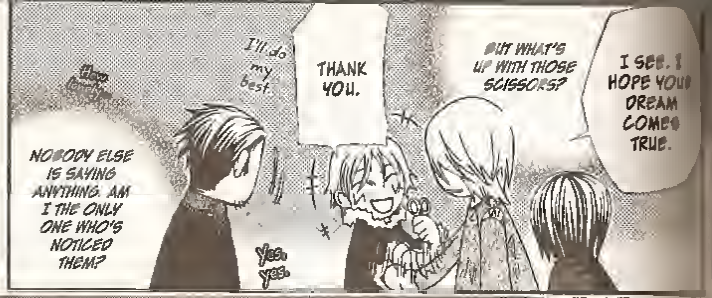

YOU'RE SEAN WES WELLER...

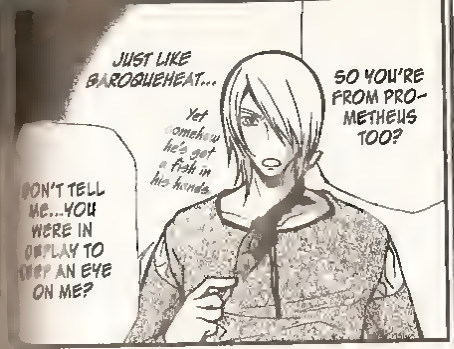
If you can think well of me it would make me happy.
SHO-GETSU?



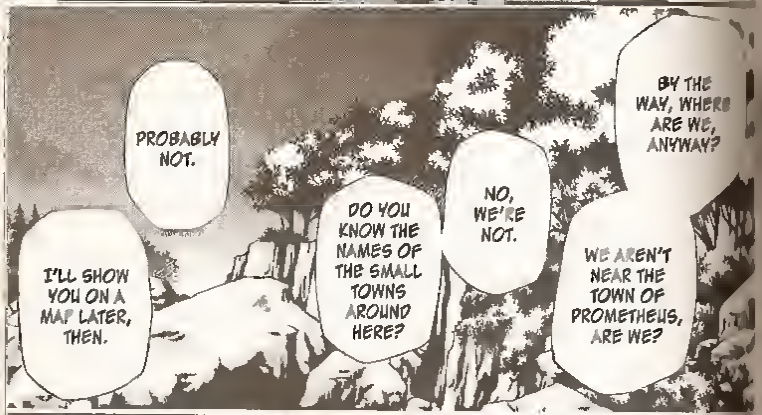

I'VE GOTTA SEE THAT BRAT AGAIN?

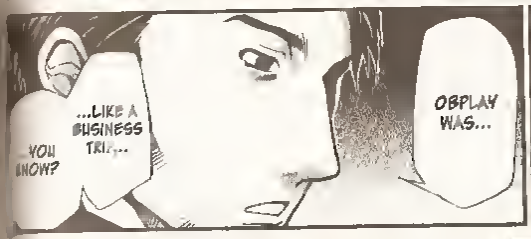

DO I INTEREST YOU LESS THAN FISH?!!!
Master Shogetsu, I'll make a holding tank for the fish!!

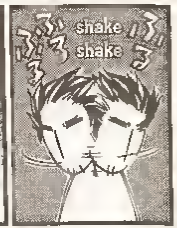

Flop flop
I'll do my best.
THANK YOU.
BUT WHAT'S UP WITH THOSE SCISSORS?
I SEE. I HOPE YOUR DREAM COMES TRUE.
NOBODY ELSE IS SAYING ANYTHING. AM I THE ONLY ONE WHO'S NOTICED THEM?
Yes, yes.

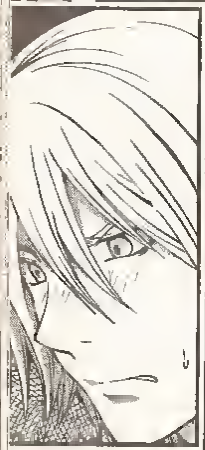

JUST LIKE BAROQUEHEAT...
SO YOU'RE FROM PROMETHEUS TOO?
Yet somehow he's got a fish in his hands.
DON'T TELL ME...YOU WERE IN OBPLAY TO KEEP AN EYE ON ME?

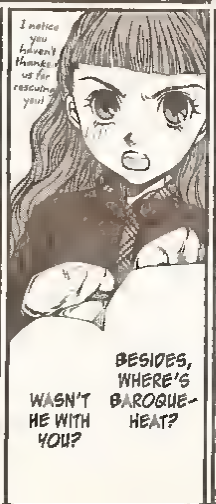
nod
HE'S A GLUTTON WHO WAS LURED HERE BY THE SMELL OF FISH.
I-I DON'T CARE ABOUT FISH!!
OR SO HE SAYS.

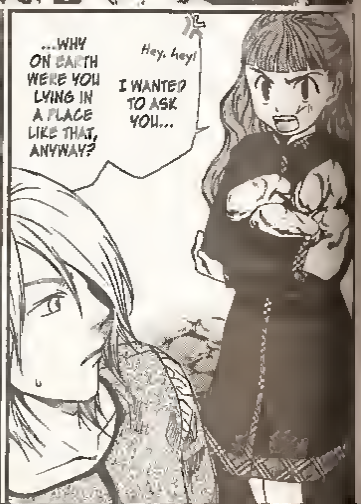

PROBABLY NOT.
I'LL SHOW YOU ON A MAP LATER, THEN.
DO YOU KNOW THE NAMES OF THE SMALL TOWNS AROUND HERE?
NO, WE'RE NOT.
BY THE WAY, WHERE ARE WE, ANYWAY?
WE AREN'T NEAR THE TOWN OF PROMETHEUS, ARE WE?


...LIKE A BUSINESS TRI...
OBPLAY WAS...
...YOU KNOW?


shake shake

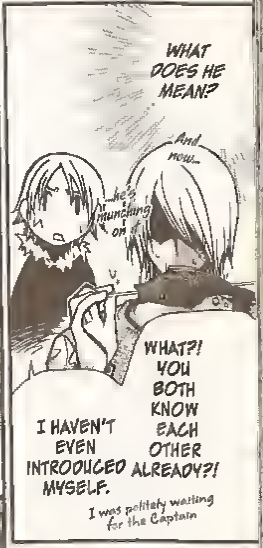



I notice you haven't thanked us for rescuing you!
WASN'T HE WITH YOU?
BESIDES, WHERE'S BAROQUE-HEAT?

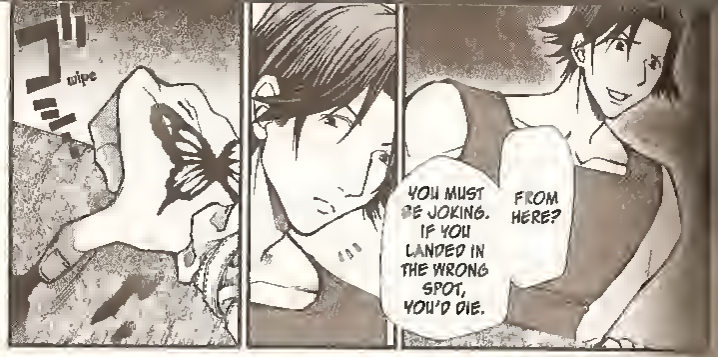

...WHY ON EARTH WERE YOU LYING IN A PLACE LIKE THAT, ANYWAY?
Hey, hey!
I WANTED TO ASK YOU...

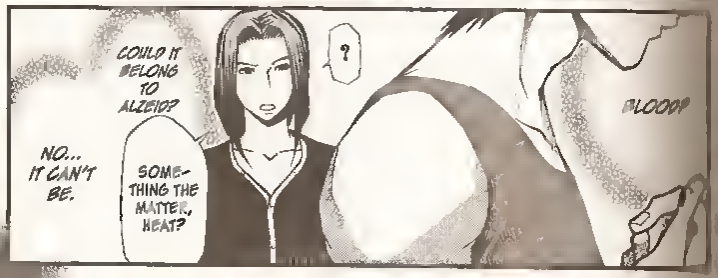
I DREAM OF SOMEDAY MARRYING SOMEONE CHARMING AND BUILDING A LOVING HOME.
MY HOBBY IS HOME-MAKING.
NICE TO MAKE YOUR ACQUAIN-TANCE.

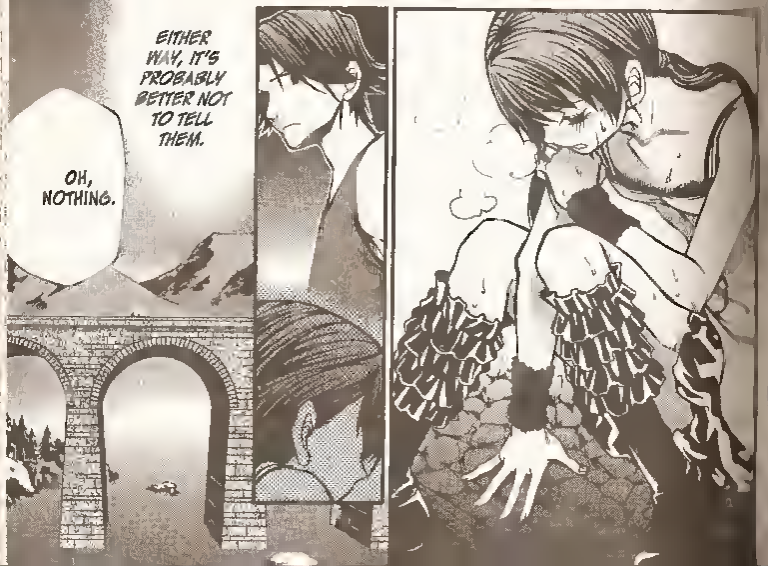
PLEASE EXCUSE THE DELAY. HOW DO YOU DO?
I'M FAY LISETTE, SPECIAL FORCES WARRANT OFFICER, A.K.A. IMMORTAL HERCULES.


WHAT DOES HE MEAN?
And now...
...he's munching on it.
WHAT?! YOU BOTH KNOW EACH OTHER ALREADY?!
I HAVEN'T EVEN INTRODUCED MYSELF.
I was politely waiting for the Captain

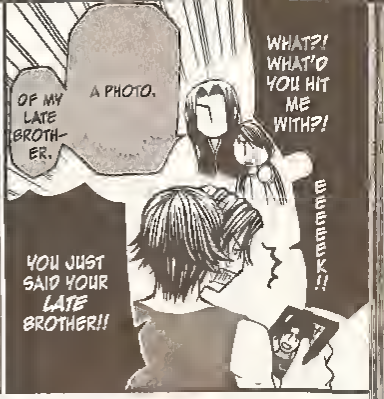
...AL-BOY IS MOVING CLOSER TO DISASTER.
OH LOOK! WHILE WE WASTE TIME LIKE THIS...
URRRGHHH!
DON'T YOU CALL THAT BEING A BURDEN?
SERIOUSLY, WE CAN GO FASTER WITHOUT YOU, RAHZEL.
RAHZEL WILL BE CARRIED LIKE BAGGAGE UNTIL WE REACH OUR DESTI-NATION.
I TOLD YOU WHEN YOU CAN'T RUN YOU PAY THE PENALTY.
DON'T BE AN IDIOT. I CAN STILL RUN!!
ARRRGH! SUCH HUMILIATION! I'M SO HUMILIATED!!!
SO BE QUIET AND LET ME CARRY YOU.
WHAT THE--?!
HA HA HA HA... AN ACCIDENT. ONLY AN ACCIDENT!
AND DON'T TOUCH MY DERRIERE!! DON'T GET CARRIED AWAY!
WELL--
ARE YOU GIVING UP ALREADY?
I THINK WE'RE ONLY ABOUT HALFWAY THERE.
H-HOW... MUCH...L-LONGER... T-TO GO?
F-FATHER... ABOUT WHERE... ARE WE AT NOW?
WOOHOOO! IT'S PENALTY TIME, RAHZEL! ☆
BAROQUE-HEAT?!
N-NO... I'M STILL OKA--
dash


wipe
FROM HERE?
YOU MUST BE JOKING. IF YOU LANDED IN THE WRONG SPOT, YOU'D DIE.


?
COULD IT BELONG TO ALZEID?
NO... IT CAN'T BE.
SOMETHING THE MATTER, HEAT?
BLOOOP

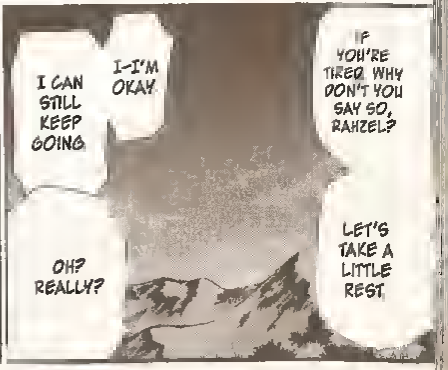

EITHER WAY, IT'S PROBABLY BETTER NOT TO TELL THEM.
OH, NOTHING.

IF YOU DON'T STOP YOUR NONSENSE, I'LL RIP SOMETHING OFF OF YOU!
SOMETHING?
YOU MEAN IT? YOU REALLY MEAN IT?!
STOP!! STOP USING ONOMATOPOEIA. STOP!!


WHAT?! WHAT'D YOU HIT ME WITH?!
A PHOTO.
OF MY LATE BROTHER.
EEEEEK!!
YOU JUST SAID YOUR LATE BROTHER!!

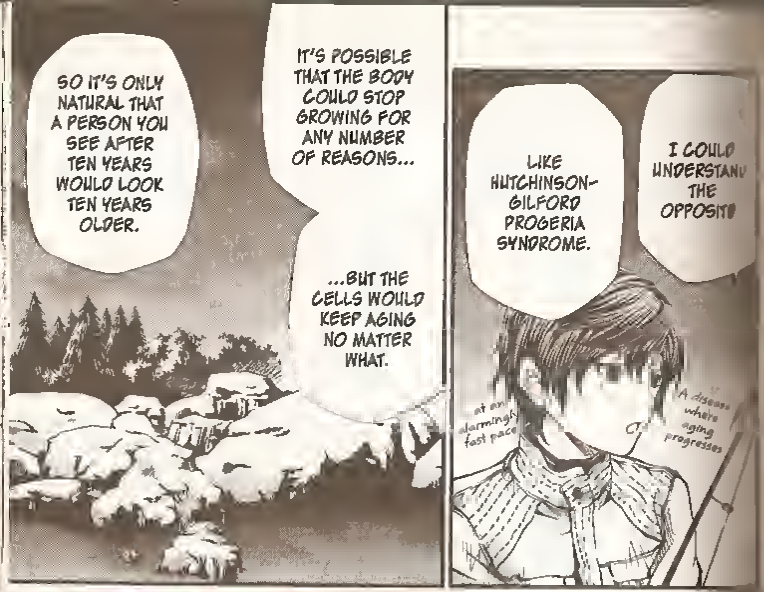
.....

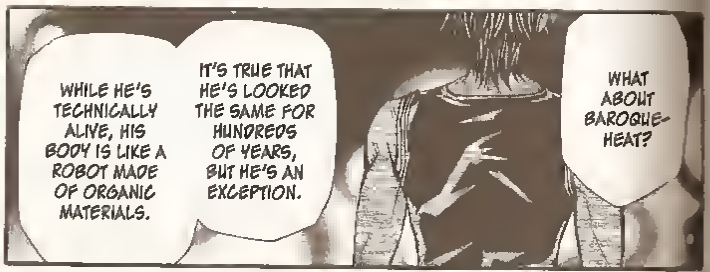
I'M EXHAUSTED, THOUGH.
WON'T YOU REST WITH YOUR FATHER FOR A BIT?


I-I'M OKAY
I CAN STILL KEEP GOING
IF YOU'RE TIRED WHY DON'T YOU SAY SO, RAHZEL?
OH? REALLY?
LET'S TAKE A LITTLE REST.

ARE YOU GOING TO REST HERE, SERA?
I DOUBT ONE WILL.
THERE'S NOWHERE TO GO IF A TRAIN COMES.
BUT IF WE HAVE TO, WE CAN JUMP OFF THE BRIDGE.

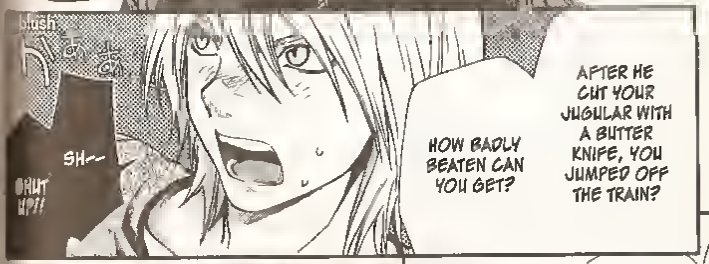
DAMMIT!!
RUNNING AT FULL SPEED FOR 60 KILOMETERS WAS UTTER LUNACY TO BEGIN WITH!!
YOU'RE RIGHT. I CAN'T. NOT ANOTHER STEP. I CAN'T RUN ANYMORE.
HA HA HA HA. YOU'RE RIGHT.


SO IT'S ONLY NATURAL THAT A PERSON YOU SEE AFTER TEN YEARS WOULD LOOK TEN YEARS OLDER.
IT'S POSSIBLE THAT THE BODY COULD STOP GROWING FOR ANY NUMBER OF REASONS...
...BUT THE CELLS WOULD KEEP AGING NO MATTER WHAT.
LIKE HUTCHINSON-GILFORD PROGERIA SYNDROME.
I COULD UNDERSTAND THE OPPOSITE
at an alarmingly fast pace
A disease where aging progresses

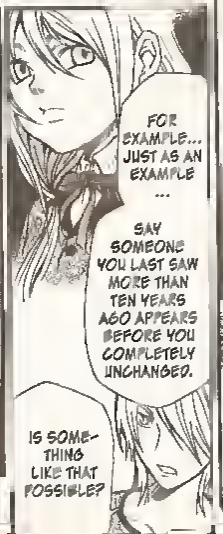

WHILE HE'S TECHNICALLY ALIVE, HIS BODY IS LIKE A ROBOT MADE OF ORGANIC MATERIALS.
IT'S TRUE THAT HE'S LOOKED THE SAME FOR HUNDREDS OF YEARS, BUT HE'S AN EXCEPTION.
WHAT ABOUT BAROQUE-HEAT?

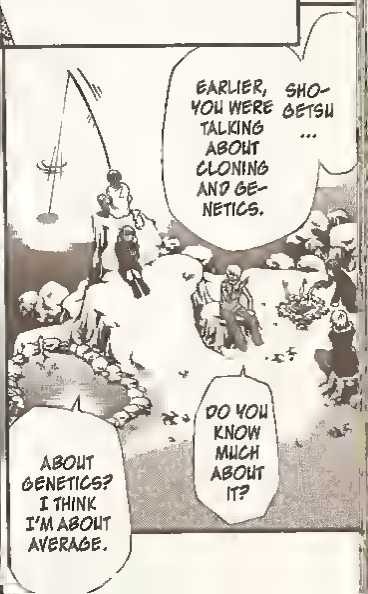
...IF ONE WERE TO USE THE RED HAIRY STUFF... PERHAPS...
THEN AGAIN...

ha
HOW EMBARRASSING!!
AND... ...YOU WERE ALL CUT UP AND RAN AWAY?
ha
ha


blush
SH--
SHUT UP!!
HOW BADLY BEATEN CAN YOU GET?
AFTER HE CUT YOUR JUGULAR WITH A BUTTER KNIFE, YOU JUMPED OFF THE TRAIN?

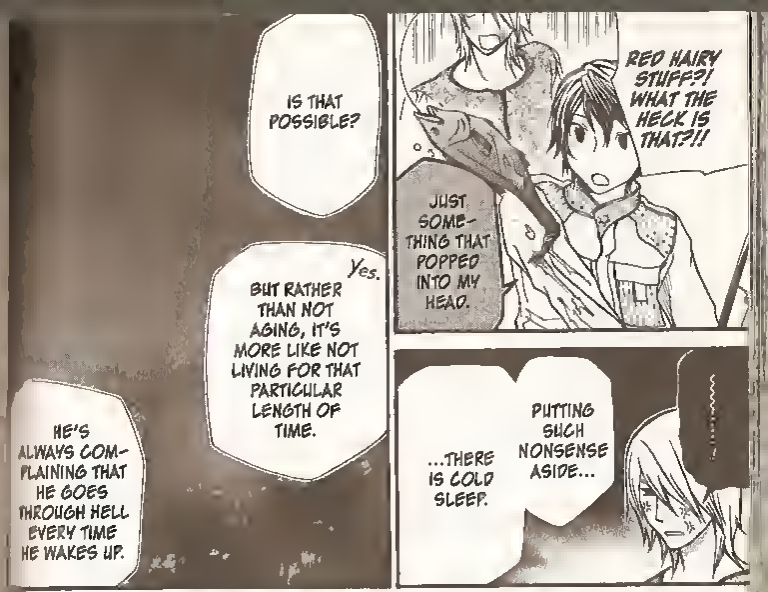
YOU MEAN THEY HAVEN'T AGED?
UH-HUH.
I THINK THAT WOULD BE DIFFICULT.

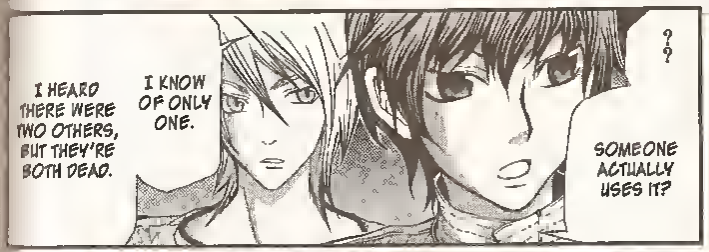

FOR EXAMPLE... JUST AS AN EXAMPLE ...
SAY SOMEONE YOU LAST SAW MORE THAN TEN YEARS AGO APPEARS BEFORE YOU COMPLETELY UNCHANGED.
IS SOMETHING LIKE THAT POSSIBLE?

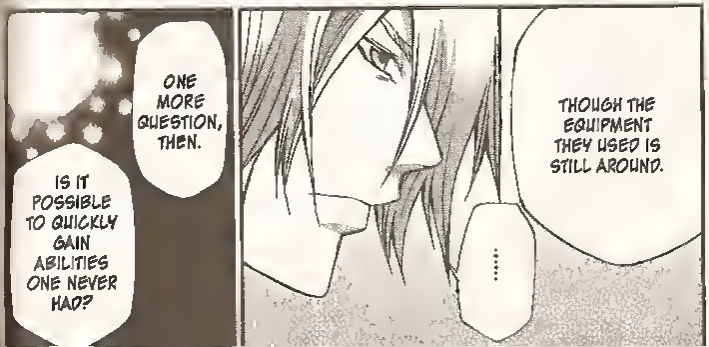

EARLIER, YOU WERE TALKING ABOUT CLONING AND GENETICS.
SHOGETSU ...
DO YOU KNOW MUCH ABOUT IT?
ABOUT GENETICS? I THINK I'M ABOUT AVERAGE.

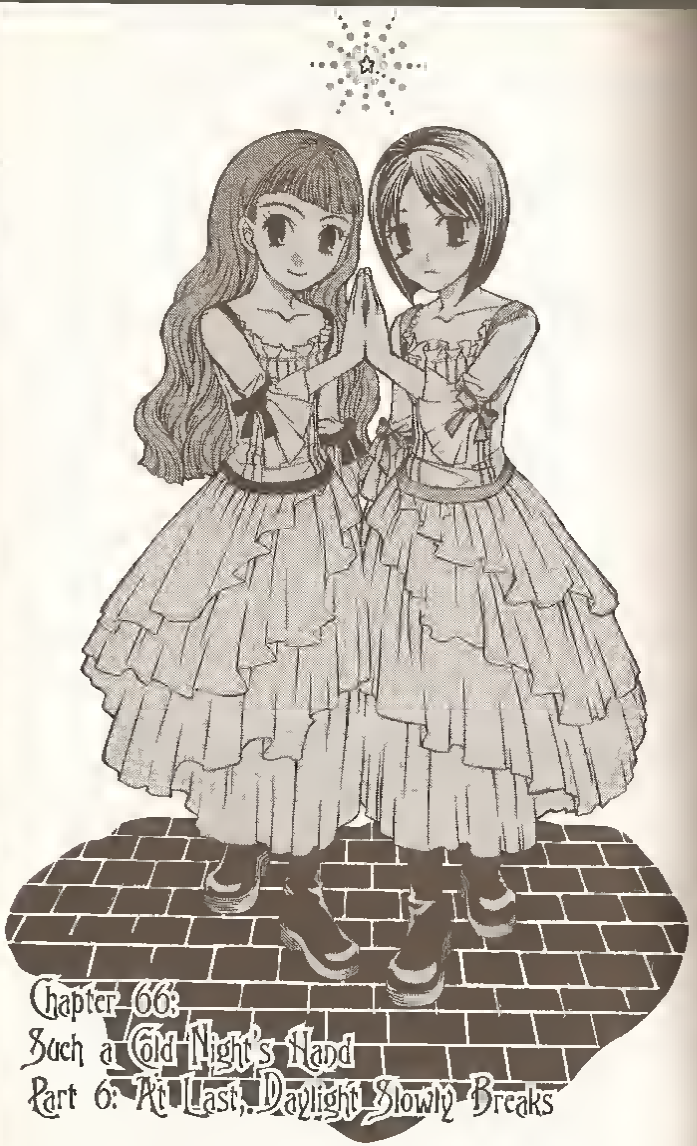
THERE'S NO WAY I SHOULD LOSE TO HIM AS BADLY AS THAT!!
NOW COULD I HAVE BEEN BEATEN BY THE ONE I WAS SUPPOSED TO REPLACE?!!
HE WAS SUPPOSED TO BE A FAILURE WHO COULDN'T DO ANYTHING!!
THAT QUESTION IS TOO ABSTRACT.
WHAT A SAD EXCUSE FOR A MAN!
SO YOU WANT TO BLAME YOUR WEAKNESS ON SOMEONE ELSE?
HMM...
REMEMBER, YOU LOST AGAINST US TOO.
...BUT YOU'RE NOT AS GOOD OR STRONG AS YOU THINK.
I DON'T KNOW WHO YOU THINK YOU ARE...
WHAT?

AS YOU WISH. I'LL MAKE YOU CRY.
HOW DARE YOU?! LET'S FIGHT RIGHT NOW!
IT'D ALWAYS BE THE SAME, NO MATTER WHAT.
STOP IT, ALZEID. YOU'RE OVERREACTING!!
IF YOU MUST FIGHT, FIGHT ME.
Really
So immature
SHE CAUGHT ME OFF GUARD.
I WOULD NEVER MAKE SUCH A MISTAKE AGAIN!!
PLEASE DON'T POINT WITH THE FISH!!

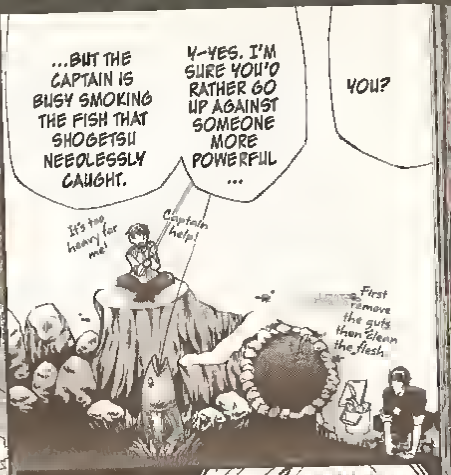

IS THAT POSSIBLE?
Yes.
BUT RATHER THAN NOT AGING, IT'S MORE LIKE NOT LIVING FOR THAT PARTICULAR LENGTH OF TIME.
HE'S ALWAYS COMPLAINING THAT HE GOES THROUGH HELL EVERY TIME HE WAKES UP.
RED HAIRY STUFF?! WHAT THE HECK IS THAT?!!
JUST SOMETHING THAT POPPED INTO MY HEAD.
...THERE IS COLD SLEEP.
PUTTING SUCH NONSENSE ASIDE...

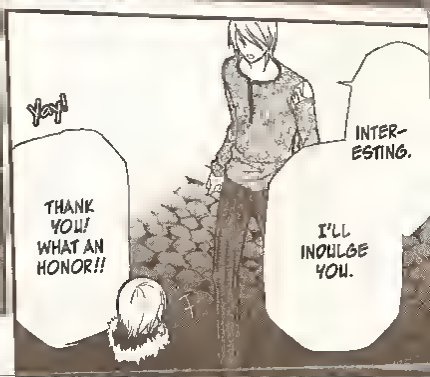

I HEARD THERE WERE TWO OTHERS, BUT THEY'RE BOTH DEAD.
I KNOW OF ONLY ONE.
??
SOMEONE ACTUALLY USES IT?

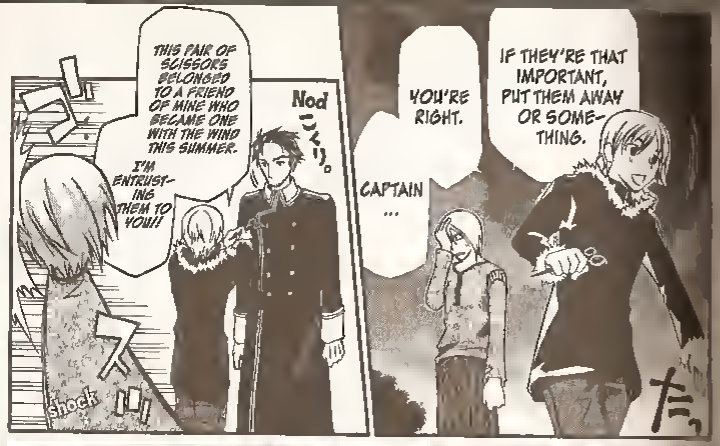

ONE MORE QUESTION, THEN.
IS IT POSSIBLE TO QUICKLY GAIN ABILITIES ONE NEVER HAD?
THOUGH THE EQUIPMENT THEY USED IS STILL AROUND.
.....



Chapter 66:
Such a Cold Night's Hand
Part 6: At Last, Daylight Slowly Breaks

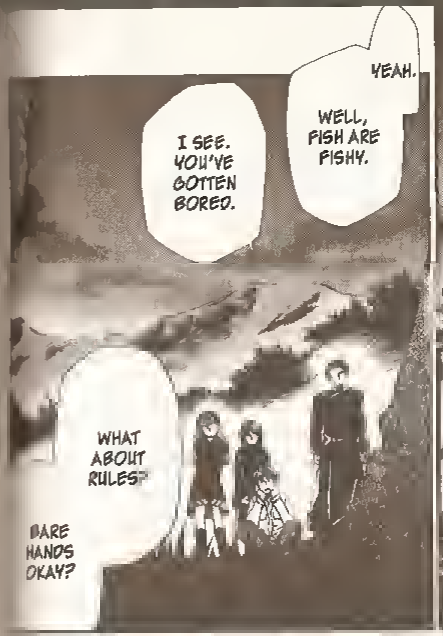

...BUT THE CAPTAIN IS BUSY SMOKING THE FISH THAT SHOGETSU NEEDLESSLY CAUGHT.
U-YES. I'M SURE YOU'D RATHER GO UP AGAINST SOMEONE MORE POWERFUL ...
YOU?
It's too heavy for me!
Captain help!
First remove the guts then clean the flesh.



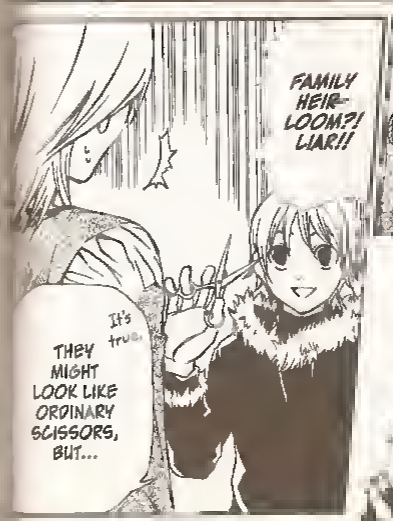

THIS PAIR OF SCISSORS BELONGED TO A FRIEND OF MINE WHO BECAME ONE WITH THE WIND THIS SUMMER.
I'M ENTRUSTING THEM TO YOU!!
Nod
こくり。
shock
YOU'RE RIGHT.
CAPTAIN ...
IF THEY'RE THAT IMPORTANT, PUT THEM AWAY OR SOMETHING.

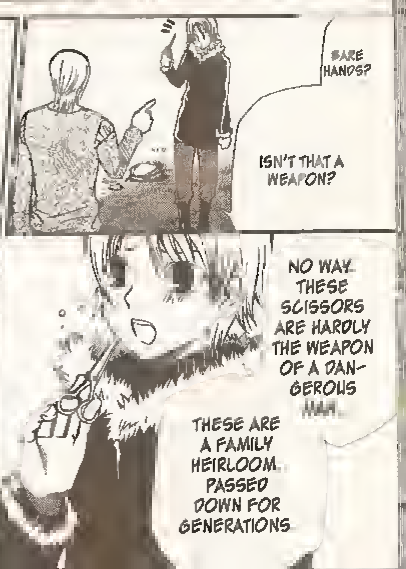
DIFFERENT AGAIN!!
THEY WERE GIVEN TO ME BY MY SISTER ON MY BIRTHDAY.
NO I DIDN'T.
YOU LIED TO ME?!

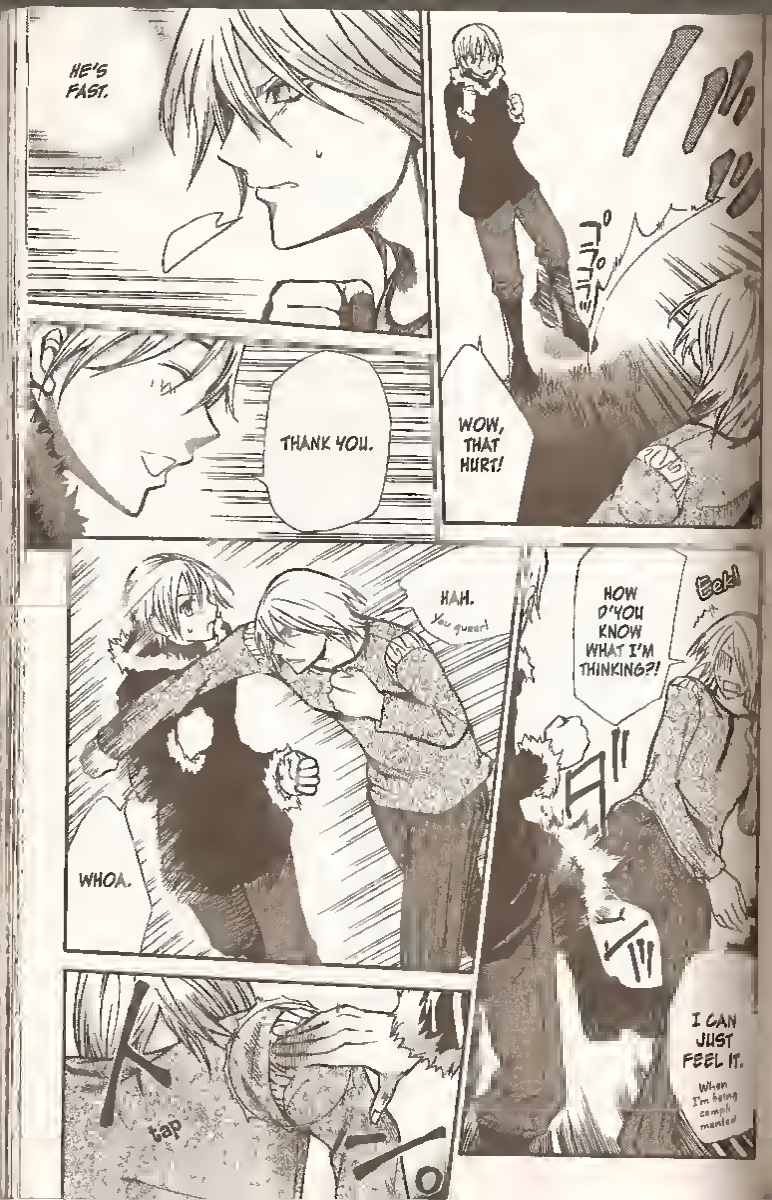
JUST GIVE THE SIGNAL!!
WHAT A BRAT.
IS THAT SUPPOSED TO BE SHORTHAND FOR GETTING BEATEN UP IN FIVE SECONDS?!!
YOU SHOULDN'T GO THROUGH WITH THIS.
AGAINST THE WARRANT OFFICER YOU'LL BE A FIVE-SECOND BEAT.


YEAH.
WELL, FISH ARE FISHY.
I SEE. YOU'VE GOTTEN BORED.
WHAT ABOUT RULES?
BARE HANDS OKAY?

ARE YOU DONE FISHING, MASTER?


FAMILY HEIRLOOM?! LIAR!!
It's true.
THEY MIGHT LOOK LIKE ORDINARY SCISSORS, BUT...


BARE HANDS?
ISN'T THAT A WEAPON?
NO WAY. THESE SCISSORS ARE HARDLY THE WEAPON OF A DANGEROUS MAN.
THESE ARE A FAMILY HEIRLOOM. PASSED DOWN FOR GENERATIONS

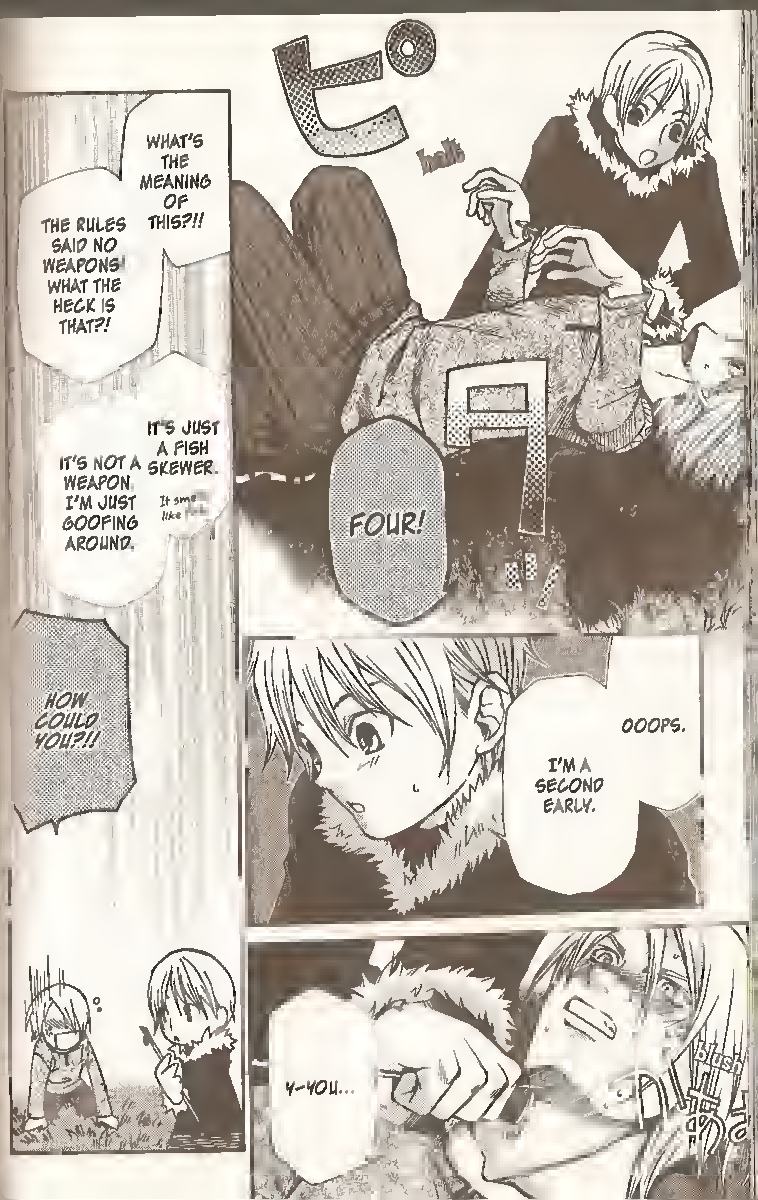

HE'S FAST.
THANK YOU.
WOW, THAT HURT!
WHOA.
HAH. You guess!
HOW D'YOU KNOW WHAT I'M THINKING?!
Eek!
I CAN JUST FEEL IT.
When I'm being completely manipulated
tap

BOTH OF YOU READY?
clap
BEGIN!!
dash
spin
FAG

IDIOT JOKER.
WHOA.
ONE.
WHOOA!
TWO.
THREE.
yank

WAAAAN!
AH AH AH OOF!
WAA HA HA. HOW SAD!!
ha ha ha ha!
ON THE CONTRARY, HE'S NOT HALF BAD.
HE'S STRONG, AND HIS SPEED AND REACTION TIME ARE PRETTY GOOD TOO.
TRUE. IT'S WORSE THAN I IMAGINED.
..WHAT'S THE WORD?
... WELL ...
IT'S JUST THAT HE'S...
YAY! GO BEAT HIM UP, WARRANT OFFICER!
OKAY, SALASANEIA, HERE COMES THE FIVE-SECOND BEAT YOU ASKED FOR.
WHAT?!
I'M ALWAYS METICULOUS AND PAY ATTENTION TO DETAILS!
Not quite.
WHAT THE?!
HMM.
YES! EXACTLY!
SLOPPY.

KID'S GAME, YOU SAY?
IT'S UNACCEPTABLE. I DEMAND A REMATCH!!
HOW COULD I TAKE THIS KID'S GAME SERIOUSLY?!!
THAT'S RIGHT. WE'LL PLAY SERIOUS THIS TIME.
USE THE WEAPON OF YOUR CHOICE.
SO WHAT'LL IT BE?
ARE YOU GONNA USE THOSE SCISSORS?
DON'T WORRY. I'LL GO EASY ON YOU.
THAT'S DANGEROUS.
BESIDES, I CAN'T USE MAGIC AND STUFF, SO I'M AT A DISADVANTAGE.
A KNIFE?
I'LL USE...
BUT IF YOU WANT TO KNOW MY FAVORITE, IT'S THIS.
rummage
WELL, I CAN HANDLE MOST GUNS...
GO EASY ON ME? OKAY THEN.


WHAT'S THE MEANING OF THIS?!!
THE RULES SAID NO WEAPONS! WHAT THE HECK IS THAT?!
IT'S JUST A FISH SKEWER.
It smells like fish.
IT'S NOT A WEAPON. I'M JUST GOOFING AROUND.
HOW COULD YOU?!!
FOUR!
OOOPS.
I'M A SECOND EARLY.
Y-YOU...

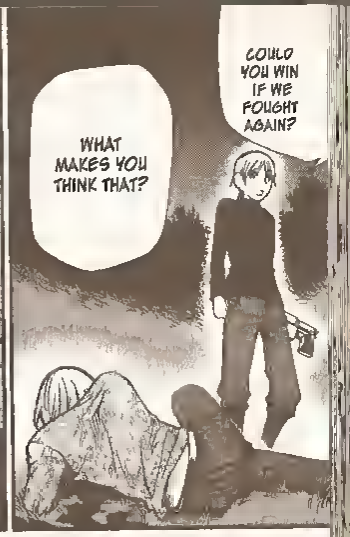
BEGIN!
dlp
SUCH HEAVY BULLETS WITH SUCH A THIN BARREL
stare
WHAT ARE YOU LOOKING AT IN THE MIDDLE OF A BATTLE?
GOOD LUCK, YOU TWO!
NOW THAT YOU BOTH HAVE YOUR WEAPONS, ARE YOU READY?
YOU SAY THAT SO CASUALLY.
IT'LL TAKE OUT A HUGE CHUNK OF FLESH AND BONE IF YOU'RE HIT WITH IT.
IT'S HEAVIER THAN DEPLETED URANIUM
HE'S BEHIND ME?
HUH?

HEY! WHERE DID MY GUN GO?
Huh?
HOW WOULD I KNOW?
I MUST'VE MISPLACED IT BACK ON--
I'LL LEND YOU MINE THIS TIME.
HANDLE IT WITH CARE.
WHAT? DID YOU LOSE IT?
Grr...
W-WHOA!
droop
THAT'S NOT WHAT YOU SAY WHEN YOU THROW A--
Hmph
WHAT'S GOING ON? THIS GUN IS SO HEAVY.
UH-HUH. THE GUN IS HEAVY TOO, BUT THE BULLETS ARE MADE OF A SPECIAL ALLOY WITH A SPECIFIC GRAVITY OF OVER 20.
SPECIFIC GRAVITY 20... ABOUT 1.8 TIMES THE DENSITY OF LEAD BULLETS.
YOU WOULDN'T GUESS TO LOOK AT IT, WOULD YOU?

GAH...
OOOOH...
GAAAAH!
gush
OH DEAR.
ARRRGH
flop
flop
HE DIDN'T EVEN LAST FIVE SECONDS
WHAT SHALL WE DO, SALA-SANE!A? YOUR GUN'S COVERED IN BLOOD.
DON'T WORRY ABOUT IT. I CAN WIPE IT OFF.
F... IGHT...
HAVING YOUR JUGULAR CUT TWICE IN ONE NIGHT ISN'T SOMETHING YOU EXPERIENCE EVERY DAY
ANOTHER FIGHT...
SHE GAVE THE START SIGNAL WHILE I WAS LOOKING AWAY. IT DOESN'T COUNT.
HOW COULD THIS HAPPEN?
I CAN'T LOSE TO A CHILD LIKE THIS!
HOW COULD I BE BEATEN TWICE IN ONE NIGHT?
I CAN'T BE THIS MUCH OF A WEAKLING!
WOULD YOU HAVE WON IF YOU'D BEEN PAYING ATTENTION?
I APPRECIATE YOUR KINDNESS...
...BUT I CAN'T GO EASY ON ANYBODY.

...THAT THE MOMENT YOU MISCALCULATED YOUR OPPONENT'S ABILITIES...
...YOU'D ALREADY LOST TO THE OTHER CLONE.
SO I THINK THE WARRANT OFFICER WAS TRYING TO TELL YOU...
YOU JUST TOLD ME A MINUTE AGO, WHEN YOU WERE AGITATED.
WAIT!! YOU SAID THE OTHER CLONE!
HOW DID YOU FIND OUT?
I DON'T GET THAT GIRL'S TASTE AT ALL.
HUMAN-FACED BEANBAGS.
BY THE WAY, WHAT ARE THOSE?
I ALREADY KNOW THAT!!
WHAT WILL YOU DO NEXT?
Boy I'm in really bad shape--in so many ways
Did I really?
THEY'RE HANDMADE BY BEFY-LADITA.
From elf-sama!

BESIDES, IS THERE EVER ANOTHER CHANCE?
ON THE BATTLEFIELD, DEFEAT ALWAYS EQUALS DEATH.


COULD YOU WIN IF WE FOUGHT AGAIN?
WHAT MAKES YOU THINK THAT?

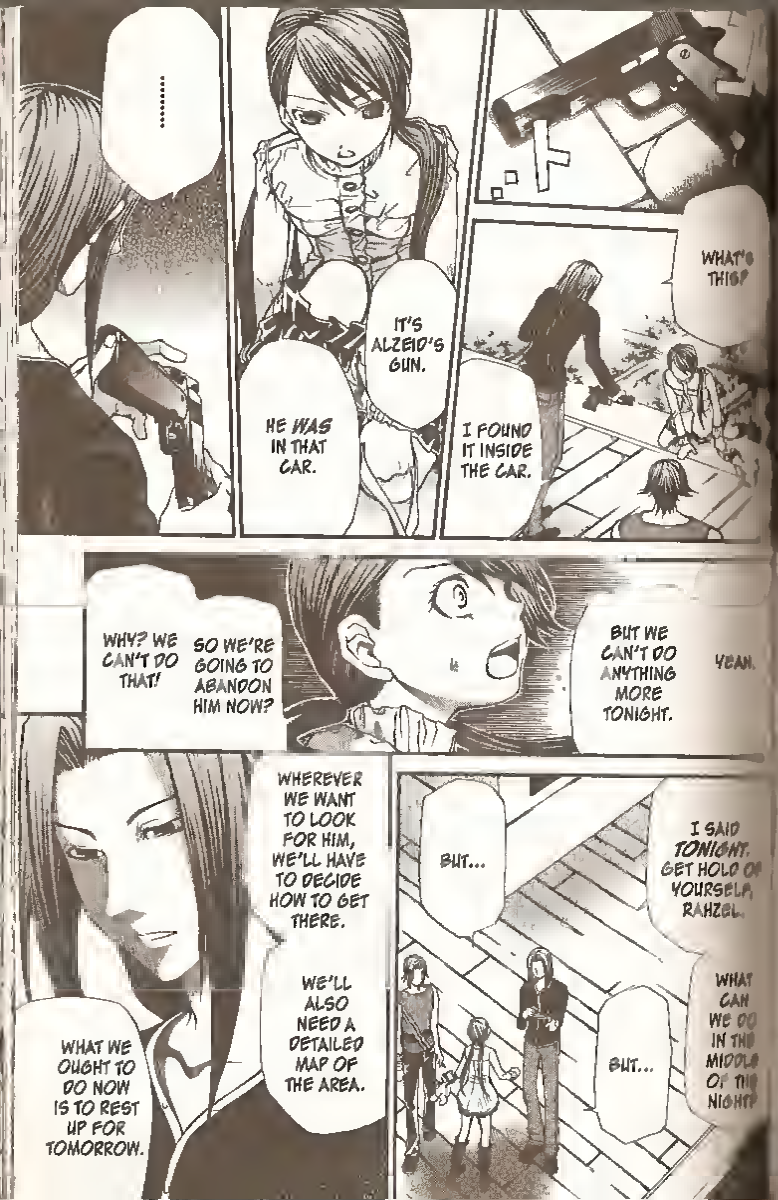
YOUR READINESS, YOUR ATTITUDE, IS EVERYTHING.
SOMEONE WHO CAN'T FIGHT TODAY WON'T BE ABLE TO FIGHT TOMORROW.

WAIT!!
WHY DO YOU MENTION RAHZEL?
DOES SHE HAVE TO DO SOMETHING WITH PROMETHEUS TOO?!
YOU SAID FRIENDS YOU HAVE SOMEONE SPECIFIC IN MIND?
PROBABLY BAROQUE-HEAT OR SOMETHING.
YES, AND RAHZEL.
I HEARD THAT YOU WERE ALL GOING TO EBROZE, SO I THOUGHT IT'D BE MY CHANCE.
UMM...
WELL, UNDER THE CIRCUMSTANCES, I SHOULD'VE EXPECTED THIS.
HA HA.
OH DEAR.
YEAH. I'VE GOT THE ADDRESS WHERE THEY'RE STAYING TONIGHT... SOMEWHERE.
YOU'LL JOIN BAROQUE-HEAT AND THE OTHERS AGAIN, RIGHT?
WOULDN'T MEETING THEM AT THEIR DESTINATION BE EASIER THAN TRYING TO FIND THEM ON THE WAY?
GIVE ME A RIDE?
UH-HUH.
...I CAN GIVE YOU A RIDE TO THE TOWN OF EBROZE IF YOU'D LIKE.
WELL, AS TO WHERE YOU'RE GOING...
NATSUME? WHO'S THAT?
MAYBE IT'S BECAUSE SHE HAS THE SAME BLACK HAIR AND BLUE EYES AS NATSUME.
I'M INTERESTED IN WHY HE ADOPTED HER.
SHE'S ONE OF PROMETHEUS' FOUNDERS, JUST AS SECOND WAS.
SHE CREATED SERATEED AND BAROQUE-HEAT.
I ONLY KNOW THAT SHE'S SERATEED'S ADOPTED DAUGHTER.
DUNNO
AND I'M GOING TO OBSERVE YOU AND YOUR FRIENDS
HUH?
HOW DARE YOU SAY THAT TO MY FACE?! AND GET THAT GROTESQUENESS OUT OF HERE!
I'M GOING TO LIVE THERE TOO.

HUH.
I WON-DER...
...IF THEY'VE NOTICED THAT I'M GONE?
THEY MUST BE ASLEEP BY NOW.
I'M TIRED.

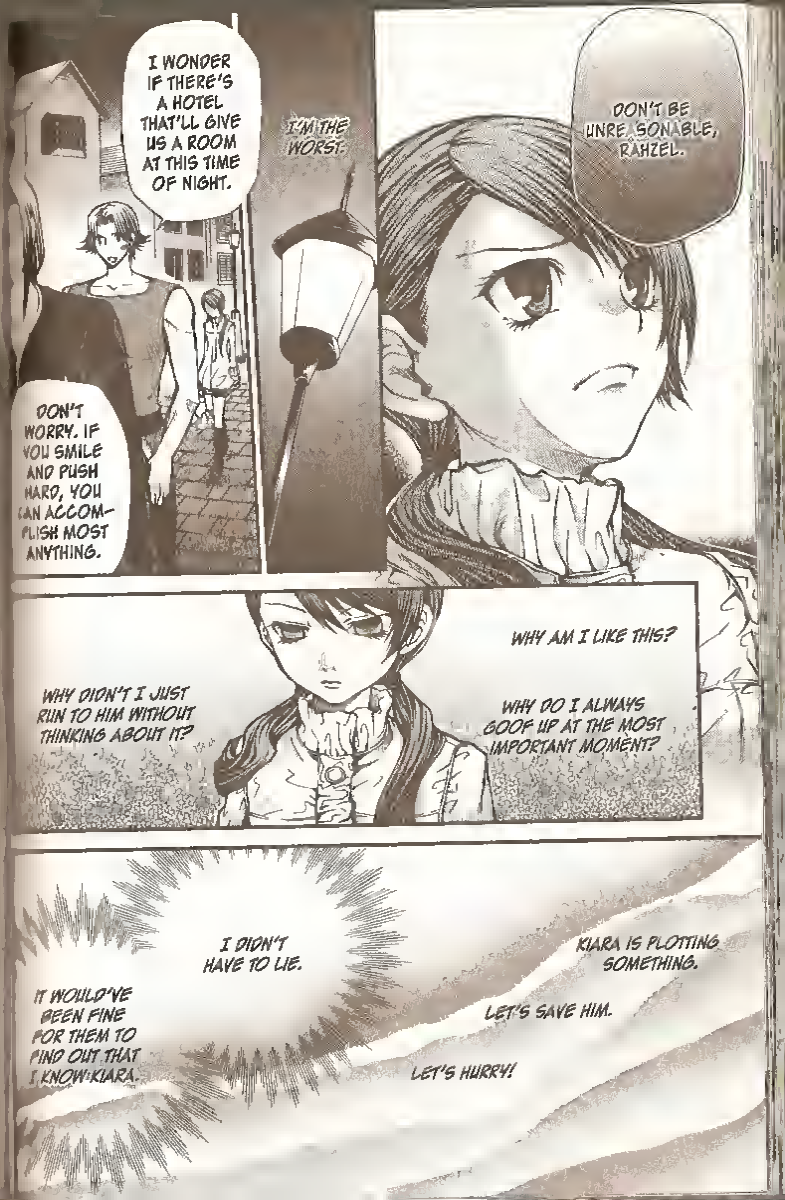
WHERE IS SHE NOW?!
COULD SHE BE THE ONE?!
THE BLACK-HAIRED, BLUE-EYED WOMAN WHO KILLED MY FATHER?!
SO!
I DON'T WANT TO HEAR ABOUT THAT.
SHE WAS APPARENTLY THE ONE WHO ORIGINATED THE PROJECT, SO MAYBE SHE WAS EVEN OVERSEEING SECOND.
IT SEEMS THAT SECOND STARTED OUT AS NATSUME'S ASSISTANT.
SHE'S...NOT AROUND.
SHE DIED LONG BEFORE YOU OR I WERE BORN.
THIS IS SOMETHING THAT ONLY THE TRUSTEES KNOW ABOUT.
Shhh!
NOT AROUND?
SORRY, I'M REALLY TIRED.
MIND IF WE CONTINUE THIS TOMORROW?
ALL RIGHT.
HMM? I WONDER.
Yawn
DOES SHE HAVE ANY RELATIVES WITH BLACK HAIR AND BLUE EYES?
I GUESS IT'S NOT HER, THEN.
SO YOU CAN'T REALLY SAY THAT THEY DON'T EXIST ANYMORE, CAN YOU?
THEY'RE LIKE GODS TO PROME-THEUS.

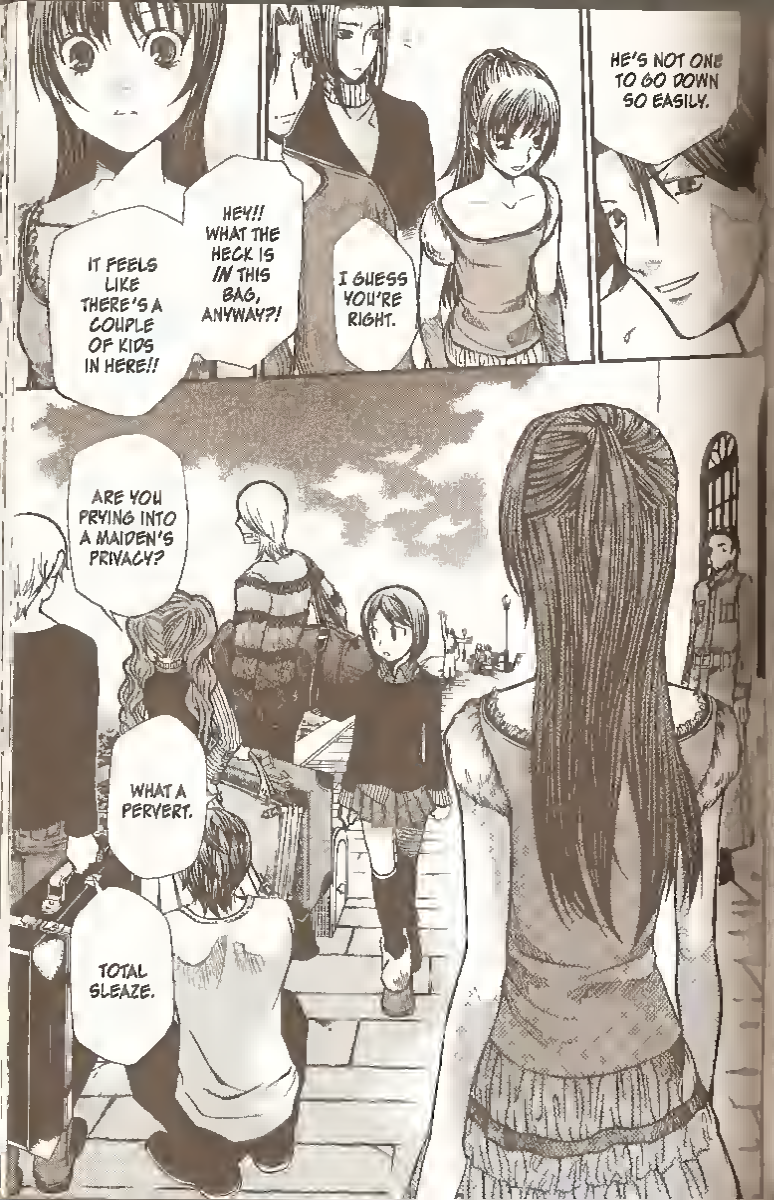
YES.
SO THE TWO OF THEM JUST LEFT THE TRAIN HERE?
A MESSAGE?
YES, BUT FIRST THEY GAVE ME A MESSAGE.
AND IF I MAY, I'D LIKE TO LEAVE A MESSAGE.
NOTHING MUCH--IT'S FOR REPAIRS TO THE TRAIN.
WHAT IS THIS?


.....
IT'S ALZEID'S GUN.
HE WAS IN THAT CAR.
I FOUND IT INSIDE THE CAR.
WHAT'S THIS?
WHY? WE CAN'T DO THAT!
SO WE'RE GOING TO ABANDON HIM NOW?
BUT WE CAN'T DO ANYTHING MORE TONIGHT.
YEAH.
WHEREVER WE WANT TO LOOK FOR HIM, WE'LL HAVE TO DECIDE HOW TO GET THERE.
WE'LL ALSO NEED A DETAILED MAP OF THE AREA.
WHAT WE OUGHT TO DO NOW IS TO REST UP FOR TOMORROW.
BUT...
I SAID TONIGHT. GET HOLD OF YOURSELF, RAHZEL.
BUT...
WHAT CAN WE DO IN THE MIDDLE OF THE NIGHT?

SORRY, WE DROPPED ALZEID ALONG THE WAY.
AND WHAT DID THE BOY SAY?
WELL...
YES. YOU MUSTN'T FORGET THAT PART.
"OOPSY DAISY! ☆"?
THAT'S THE REST.
"HOPE YOU FIND NIM. OOPSY DAISY! ☆"
IS THAT ALL?
HUH?
REALLY? BUT...
ARE YOU FRIENDS OF HIS?
ABSOLUTELY, COMPLETELY, AND TOTALLY UNABLE TO FIND ANY RELATION. THAT'S HOW UNASSOCIATED WE ARE.
TOTAL STRANGER.
THEN...
HA HA HA HA HA
HUH?
THIS DEFINITELY SHOWS HIS CHARACTERISTIC INCONSISTENCY AND PURPOSELESSNESS...
UMM... THAT IFFY POSTSCRIPT IS JUST LIKE KIARA, ISN'T IT?

The following morning.
...we continued our search for Alzeid...
...concentrating around the river Alzeid was thought to have fallen into
NOTHING IN THE WORLD...
...IS MORE IMPORTANT THAN ALZEID!!


I WONDER IF THERE'S A HOTEL THAT'LL GIVE US A ROOM AT THIS TIME OF NIGHT.
I'M THE WORST.
DON'T WORRY. IF YOU SMILE AND PUSH HARD, YOU CAN ACCOMPLISH MOST ANYTHING.
DON'T BE UNREASONABLE, RAHZEL.
WHY AM I LIKE THIS?
WHY DIDN'T I JUST RUN TO HIM WITHOUT THINKING ABOUT IT?
WHY DO I ALWAYS GOOF UP AT THE MOST IMPORTANT MOMENT?
I DIDN'T HAVE TO LIE.
IT WOULD'VE BEEN FINE FOR THEM TO FIND OUT THAT I KNOW KIARA.
KIARA IS PLOTTING SOMETHING.
LET'S SAVE HIM.
LET'S HURRY!

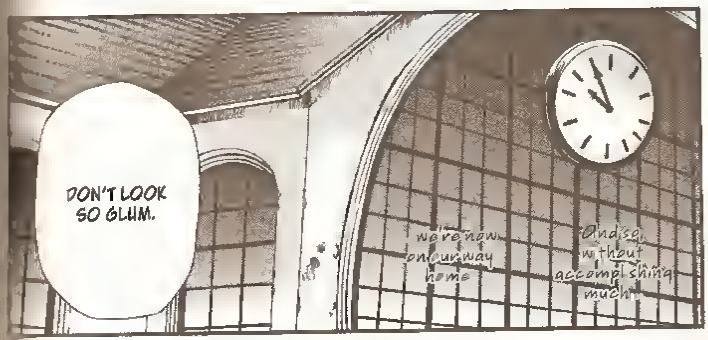

HE'S NOT ONE TO GO DOWN SO EASILY.
I GUESS YOU'RE RIGHT.
HEY!! WHAT THE HECK IS IN THIS BAG, ANYWAY?!
IT FEELS LIKE THERE'S A COUPLE OF KIDS IN HERE!!
ARE YOU PRYING INTO A MAIDEN'S PRIVACY?
WHAT A PERVERT.
TOTAL SLEAZE.

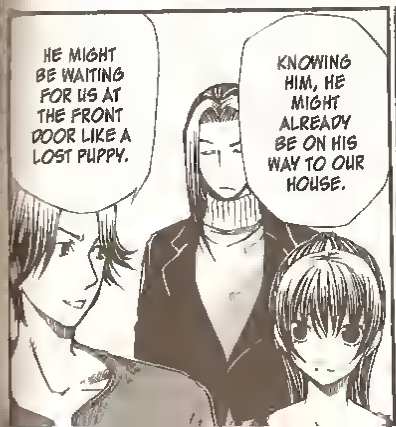
That was all we found after looking for three days and three nights

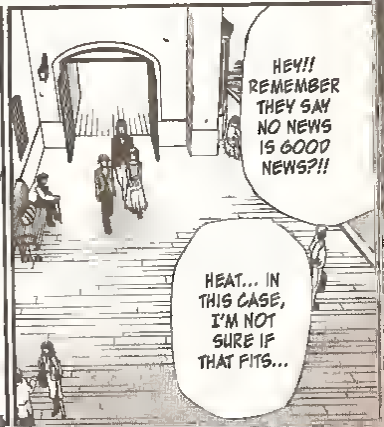
There were some eyewitness accounts

Such as...

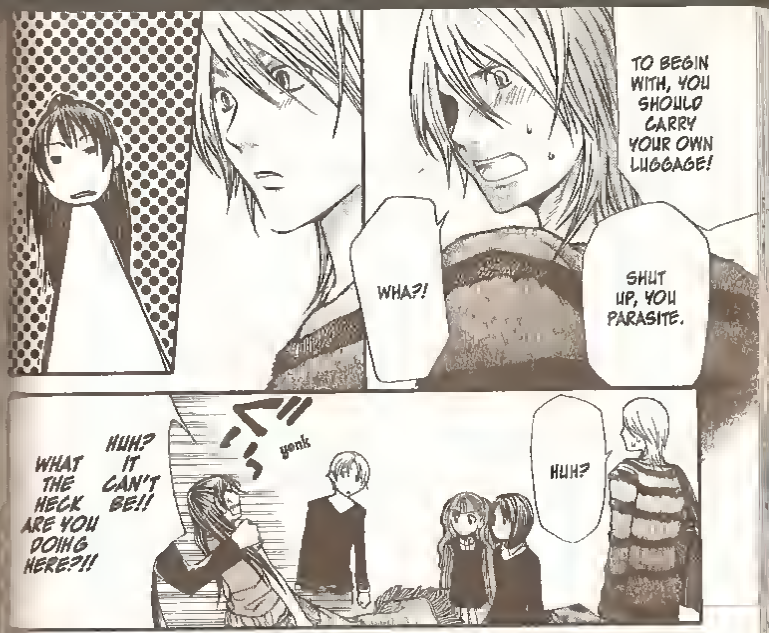
"I think I saw him around the river." Or, "He came here to shop with some cute-looking girls." Or, "He looked unhappy the whole time."

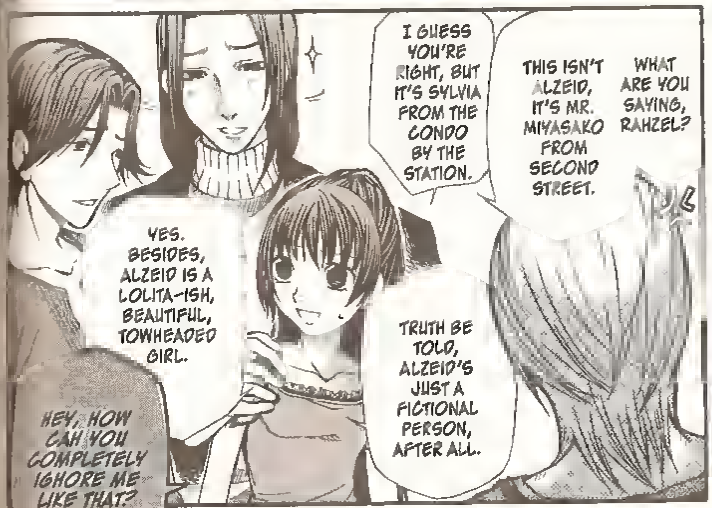


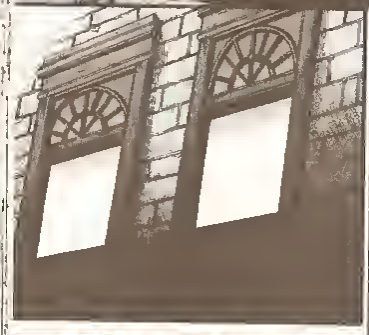




YOU WEREN'T LOOKING FOR ME...
...WERE YOU?
I GUESS WE SHOULD.
PERHAPS WE SHOULD MOVE AWAY
I MEAN, WHAT THE HECK ARE YOU GUYS DOING HERE?
COME ON, SHOGETSU.
I CAN'T BELIEVE IT, YOU WHITE-HAIRED JERK!!
AFTER ALL THAT, YOU'RE STANDING HERE LIKE NOTHING EVER HAPPENED?!
HUH? NO WAY! I FINALLY FOUND THEM.
Waaah!
WE RAN EVERY-WHERE! WE WALKED EVERY-WHERE!
WE LOOKED ALL OVER!
I'M SORRY ABOUT THAT.
HOW DARE YOU?!
Wha-
ALZEID APOLO-GIZING SO QUICKLY IS TOO WEIRD!
I'M SORRY.
AND IS THAT MY FAULT?!
I DIDN'T CHOOSE TO DISAPPEAR IN THE FIRST PLACE, YOU KNOW.


TO BEGIN WITH, YOU SHOULD CARRY YOUR OWN LUGGAGE!
WHA?!
SHUT UP, YOU PARASITE.
WHAT THE HECK ARE YOU DOING HERE?!!
HUH? IT CAN'T BE!!
gonk
HUH?


I GUESS YOU'RE RIGHT, BUT IT'S SYLVIA FROM THE CONDO BY THE STATION.
THIS ISN'T ALZEID, IT'S MR. MIYASAKO FROM SECOND STREET.
WHAT ARE YOU SAYING, RAHZEL?
YES. BESIDES, ALZEID IS A LOLITA-ISH, BEAUTIFUL, TOWHEADED GIRL.
TRUTH BE TOLD, ALZEID'S JUST A FICTIONAL PERSON, AFTER ALL.
HEY, HOW CAN YOU COMPLETELY IGNORE ME LIKE THAT?



I'M REALLY SORRY...

I SEE.

YOU DIDN'T WORRY.

THAT'S NOT IT.

I'M THE ONE WHO HAS TO APOLOGIZE

I WASN'T WORRIED AT ALL.

WHO DO YOU THINK YOU ARE?

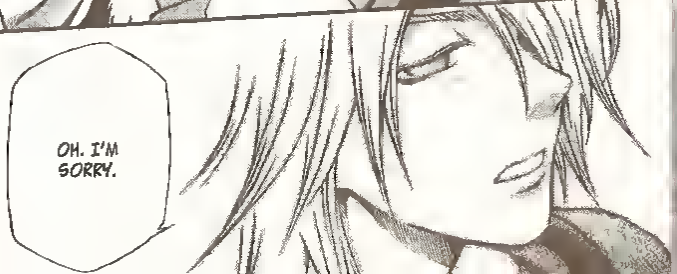
I'M SORRY I WORRIED YOU.

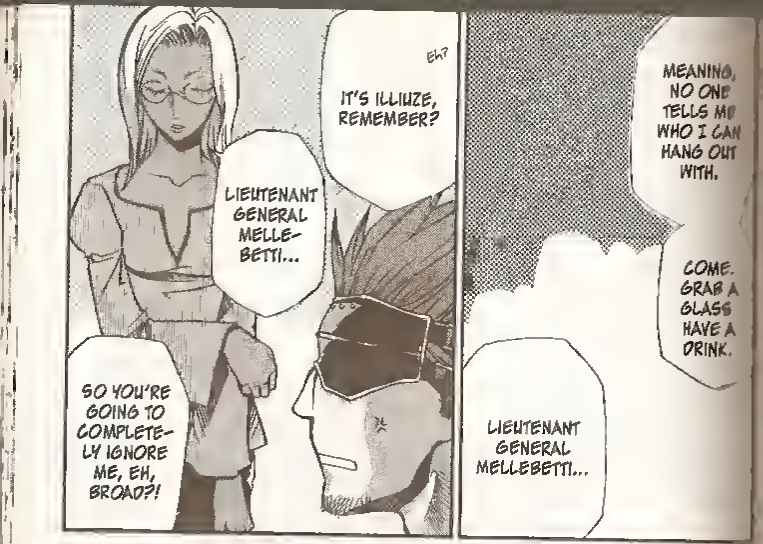
REALLY A WHOLE LOT.

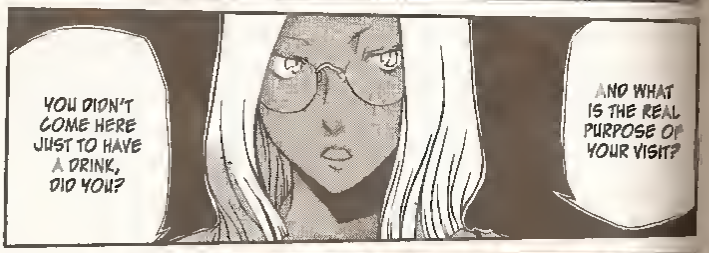
NO, I LIED.

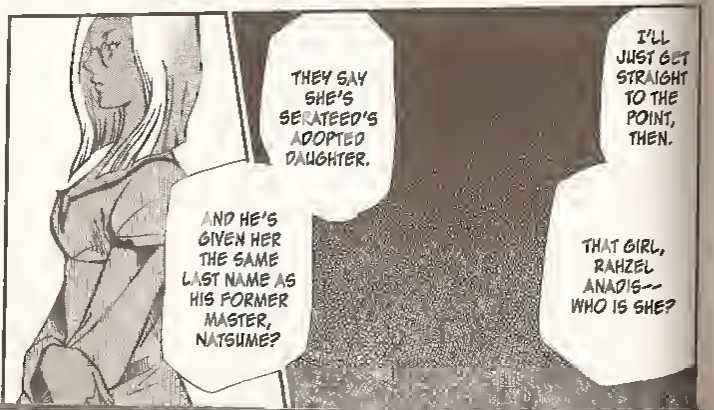
I WORRIED LOTS.

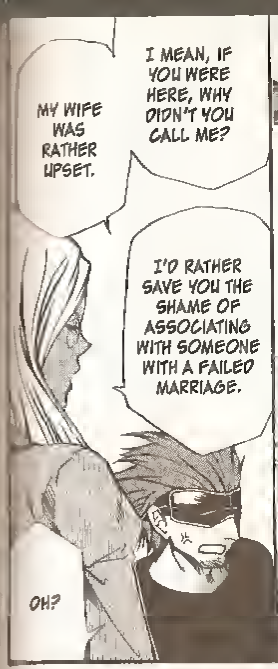
OH. I'M SORRY.

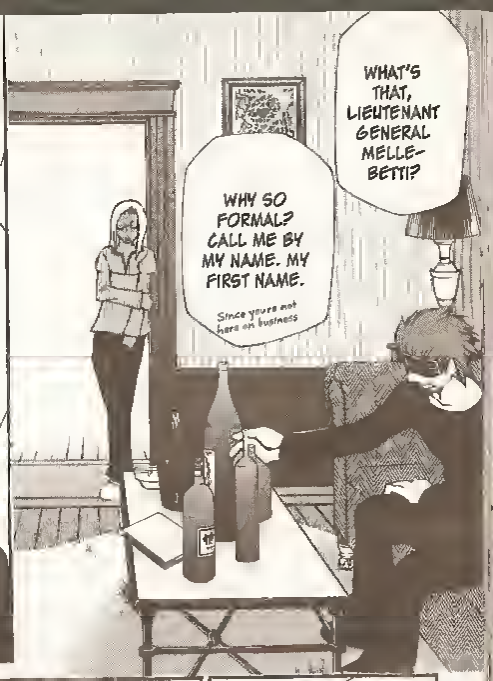



EH?
IT'S ILLIUZE, REMEMBER?
LIEUTENANT GENERAL MELLE-BETTI...
SO YOU'RE GOING TO COMPLETE-LY IGNORE ME, EH, BROAD?!
MEANING, NO ONE TELLS ME WHO I CAN HANG OUT WITH.
COME. GRAB A GLASS HAVE A DRINK.
LIEUTENANT GENERAL MELLEBETTI...

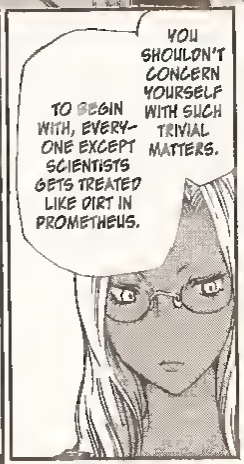

YOU DIDN'T COME HERE JUST TO HAVE A DRINK, DID YOU?
AND WHAT IS THE REAL PURPOSE OF YOUR VISIT?


THEY SAY SHE'S SERATEED'S ADOPTED DAUGHTER.
AND HE'S GIVEN HER THE SAME LAST NAME AS HIS FORMER MASTER, NATSUME?
I'LL JUST GET STRAIGHT TO THE POINT, THEN.
THAT GIRL, RAHZEL ANADIS-- WHO IS SHE?

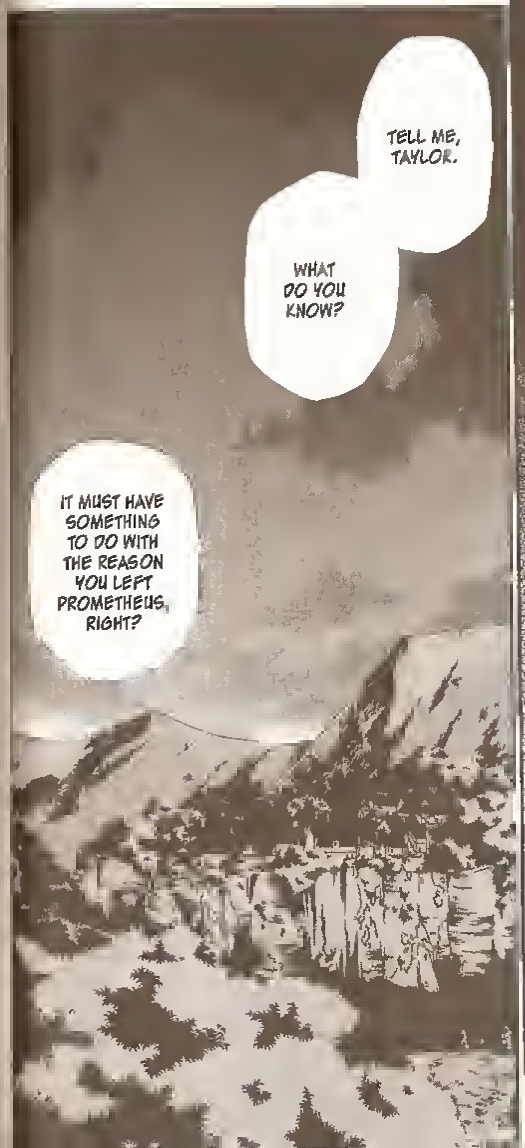

MY WIFE WAS RATHER UPSET.
I MEAN, IF YOU WERE HERE, WHY DIDN'T YOU CALL ME?
I'D RATHER SAVE YOU THE SHAME OF ASSOCIATING WITH SOMEONE WITH A FAILED MARRIAGE.
OH?


WHAT'S THAT, LIEUTENANT GENERAL MELLE-BETTI?
WHY SO FORMAL? CALL ME BY MY NAME. MY FIRST NAME.
Since you're not here on business

I WON'T LET ANYBODY GET IN MY WAY.
AND EVEN WITH MY TINY LITTLE BRAIN, I'M NOW AT THE TOP OF THE MILITARY AND A MEMBER OF THE COUNCIL.
BUT I CLIMBED UP THE ONLY WAY I KNEW HOW.

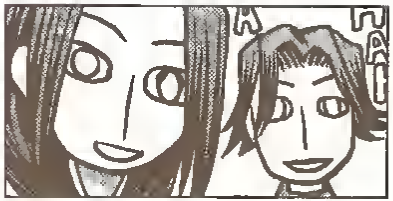

YOU SHOULDN'T CONCERN YOURSELF WITH SUCH TRIVIAL MATTERS.
TO BEGIN WITH, EVERY-ONE EXCEPT SCIENTISTS GETS TREATED LIKE DIRT IN PROMETHEUS.

"I'm home."

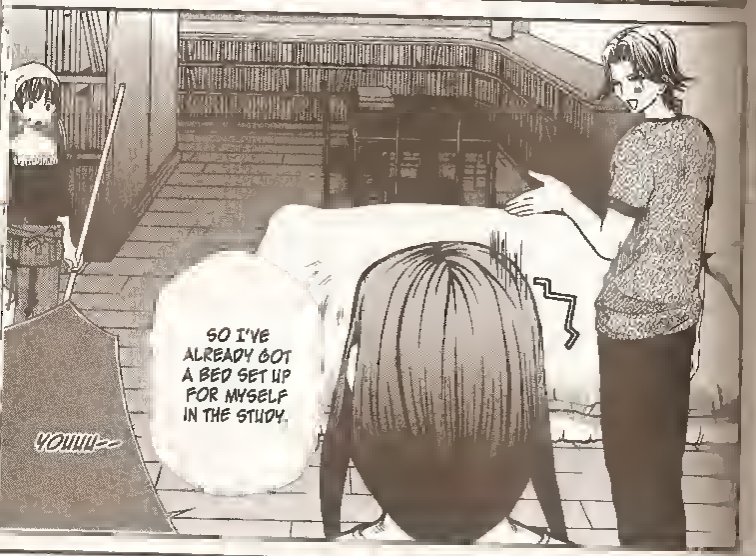

TELL ME, TAYLOR.
WHAT DO YOU KNOW?
IT MUST HAVE SOMETHING TO DO WITH THE REASON YOU LEFT PROMETHEUS, RIGHT?
AND NOW SHE'S MET ALZEID AND BAROQUEHEAT TOTALLY BY CHANCE AND IS TRAVELING WITH THEM?
DON'T MAKE ME LAUGH.
THAT'S TOO MUCH OF A COINCIDENCE.

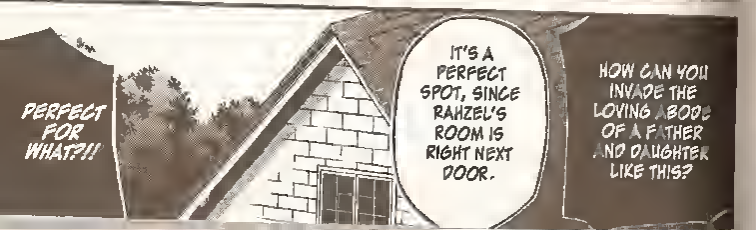
Chapter 67:
Back to the Routine
Part 1: In the Town Where It All Began

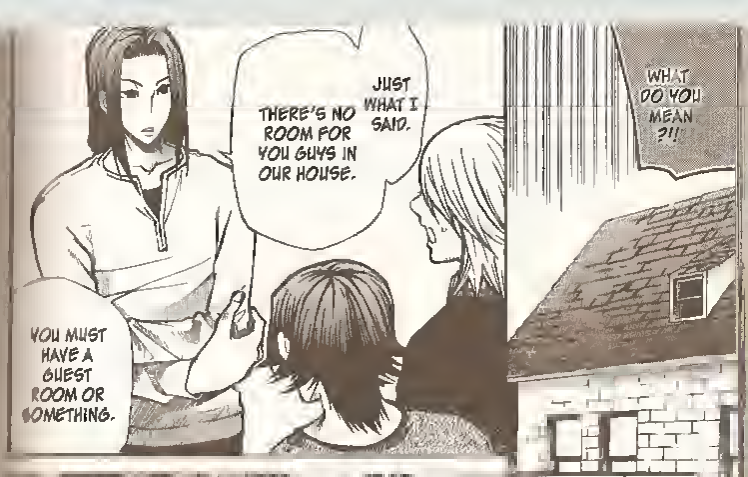
We're back.
I'm home after six months away.
My Father had kept my room clean...
...but while he was gone too, dust accumulated everywhere.
FINALLY DONE
NEXT, THE STUDY.
HUH?



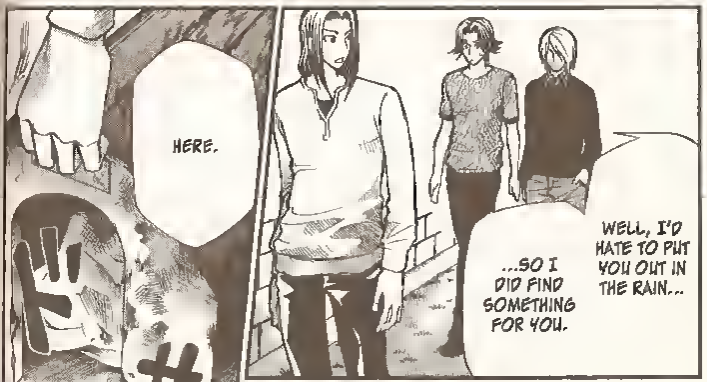
HEAT, YOU CAN SLEEP UNDER THE EAVES.
I DON'T WANT TO JUST PUT YOU GUYS
Bad Dog
HOW-EVER, I'VE KNOWN MY BROTHER'S DEVILISHNESS FOR SOME TIME, AND I EXPECTED THIS SORT OF REACTION.
OF A DOG-HOUSE?!
WHAT A TERRIBLE BROTHER!!
TOO SMALL! BESIDES, IT'S DIRTY!!

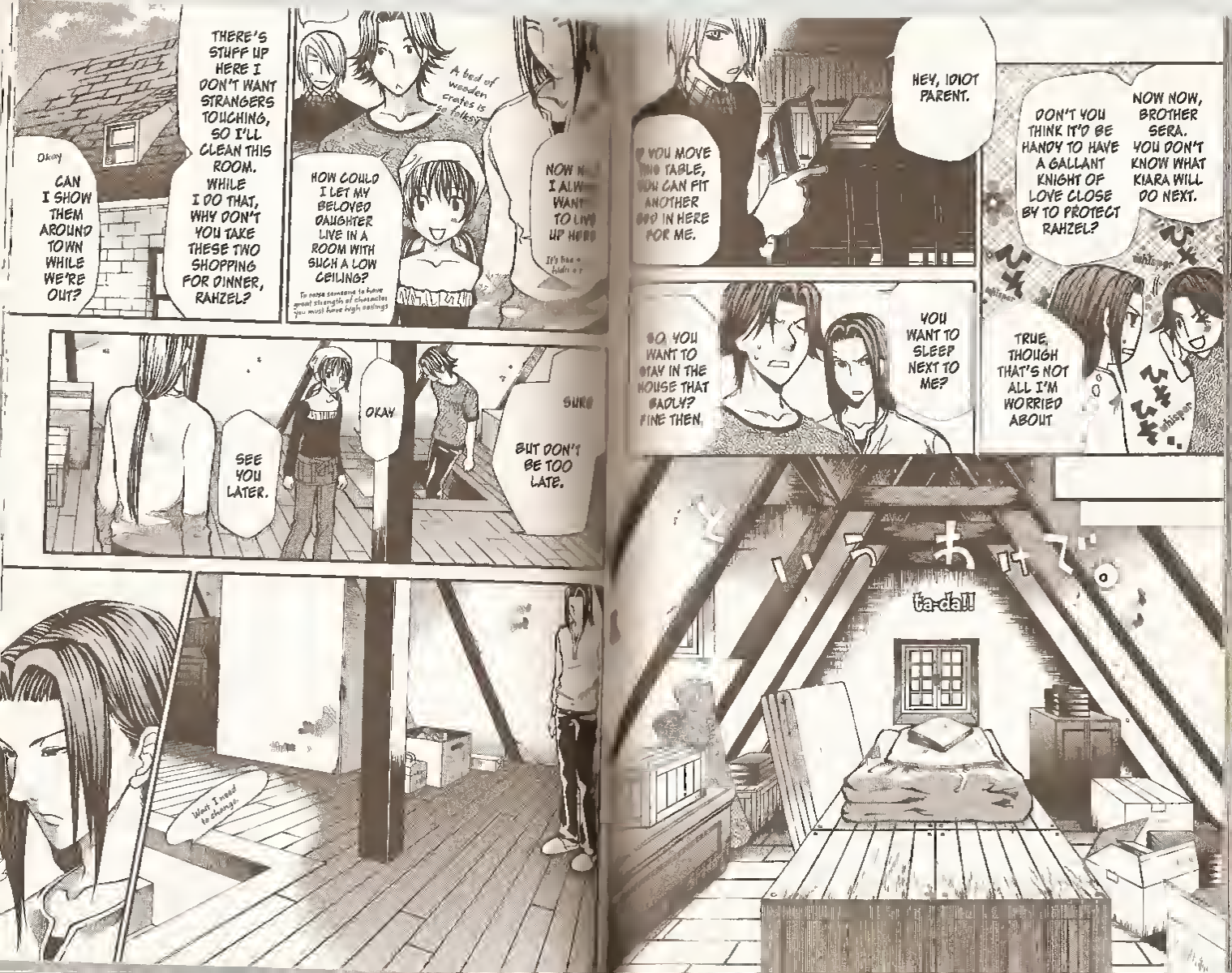

SO I'VE ALREADY GOT A BED SET UP FOR MYSELF IN THE STUDY.
YOUUU!~


PERFECT FOR WHAT?!!
IT'S A PERFECT SPOT, SINCE RAHZEL'S ROOM IS RIGHT NEXT DOOR.
HOW CAN YOU INVADE THE LOVING BOOB OF A FATHER AND DAUGHTER LIKE THIS?

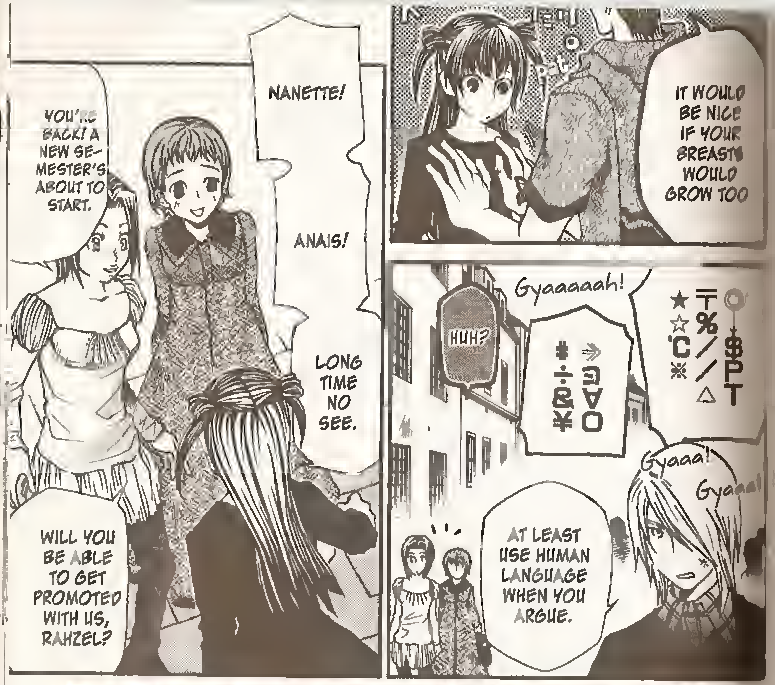

JUST WHAT I SAID.
THERE'S NO ROOM FOR YOU GUYS IN OUR HOUSE.
YOU MUST HAVE A GUEST ROOM OR SOMETHING.
WHAT DO YOU MEAN ?!!

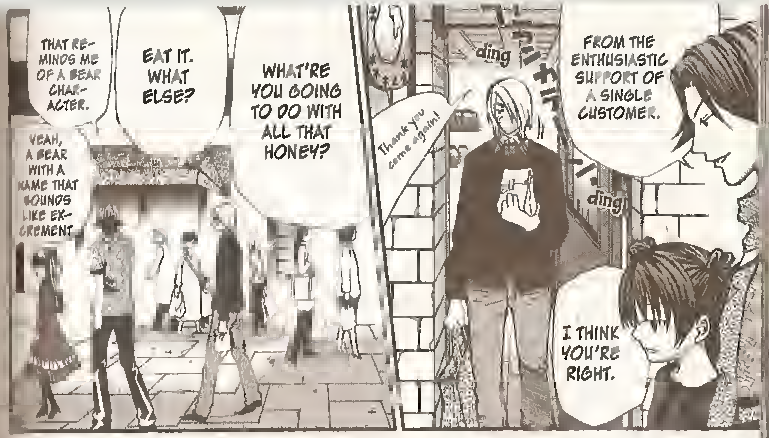
MY OLDER BROTHER CALLED ME AN ALIEN.
URGH.
DO YOU CALL FREELOADERS "GUESTS" ON YOUR PLANET?
GUEST ROOMS ARE FOR GUESTS.


HERE.
...SO I DID FIND SOMETHING FOR YOU.
WELL, I'D HATE TO PUT YOU OUT IN THE RAIN...


THERE'S STUFF UP HERE I DON'T WANT STRANGERS TOUCHING, SO I'LL CLEAN THIS ROOM. WHILE I DO THAT, WHY DON'T YOU TAKE THESE TWO SHOPPING FOR DINNER, RAHZEL?
Okay
CAN I SHOW THEM AROUND TOWN WHILE WE'RE OUT?
A bed of wooden crates is so fabsy!
HOW COULD I LET MY BELOVED DAUGHTER LIVE IN A ROOM WITH SUCH A LOW CEILING?
To make someone to have great strength of character, you must have high ceilings
NOW I ALWAYS WANT TO LIVE UP HERE
It's like a loft or something
SURE
BUT DON'T BE TOO LATE.
OKAY
SEE YOU LATER.
Want I need to change.
HEY, IDIOT PARENT.
IF YOU MOVE THIS TABLE, YOU CAN FIT ANOTHER BED IN HERE FOR ME.
NOW NOW, BROTHER SERA. YOU DON'T KNOW WHAT KIARA WILL DO NEXT.
DON'T YOU THINK IT'D BE HANDY TO HAVE A GALLANT KNIGHT OF LOVE CLOSE BY TO PROTECT RAHZEL?
whisper
TRUE, THOUGH THAT'S NOT ALL I'M WORRIED ABOUT
whisper
YOU WANT TO SLEEP NEXT TO ME?
SO, YOU WANT TO STAY IN THE HOUSE THAT BADLY? FINE THEN.
Ta-da!!

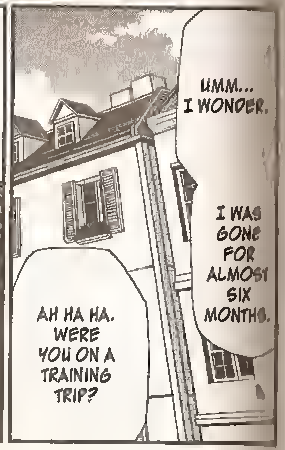
FOR EXAMPLE, THIS SHOP BELONGS TO A CLASSMATE'S FAMILY, SO THEY USUALLY GIVE ME A GOOD DEAL.
A MONEY STORE?
UH-HUH. WE DON'T SHOP HERE VERY OFTEN, BUT...
IT'S ONLY A HUNCH...
...BUT I BET THEIR SALES WILL GO UP ASTRONOMICALLY IN THE NEAR FUTURE.
WHY?
clink
clink
I'LL TAKE YOU TO MY FAVORITE SHOPS LATER.
HMM.
GROCERIES AND RESTAURANTS ARE ON THIS STREET.
THOUGH IT'S BETTER TO GO BY THE STATION FOR CLOTHES AND SUNDRIES.
Cafe
OH MAN.
HOW DID THINGS GET THIS WAY...?


NANETTE!
YOU'RE BACK! A NEW SEMESTER'S ABOUT TO START.
ANAIS!
LONG TIME NO SEE.
WILL YOU BE ABLE TO GET PROMOTED WITH US, RAHZEL?
IT WOULD BE NICE IF YOUR BREASTS WOULD GROW TOO
Gyaaaaah!
HUH?
AT LEAST USE HUMAN LANGUAGE WHEN YOU ARGUE.
Gyaaa!
Gyaaa!

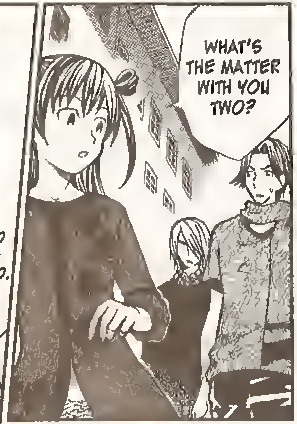

THAT REMINDS ME OF A BEAR CHARACTER.
YEAH, A BEAR WITH A NAME THAT SOUNDS LIKE EXCREMENT.
EAT IT. WHAT ELSE?
WHAT'RE YOU GOING TO DO WITH ALL THAT HONEY?
ding
Thank you come again!
FROM THE ENTHUSIASTIC SUPPORT OF A SINGLE CUSTOMER.
ding
I THINK YOU'RE RIGHT.

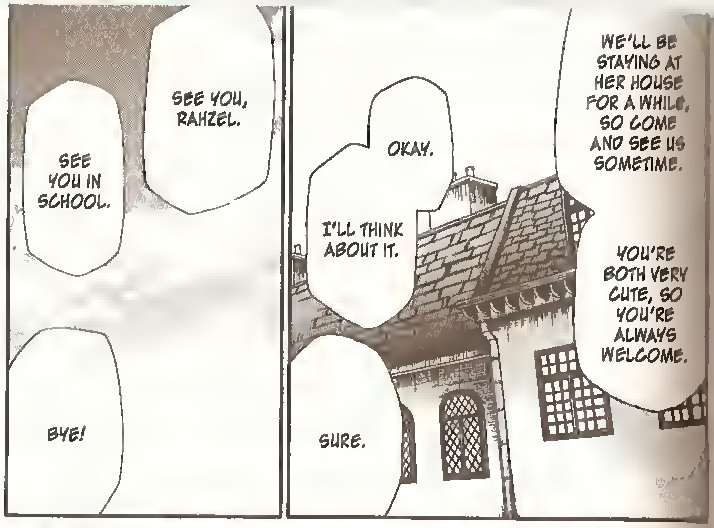
THEY HAVE AN OPEN-AIR MARKET ON THE WEEKEND, SO LET'S COME BACK THEN. OKAY?
...BUT THERE ARE LOTS OF INTERESTING SHOPS BACK IN THE ALLEYS.
IT ISN'T LONG 'TIL SUNDOWN, SO I CAN'T SHOW YOU MUCH TODAY...

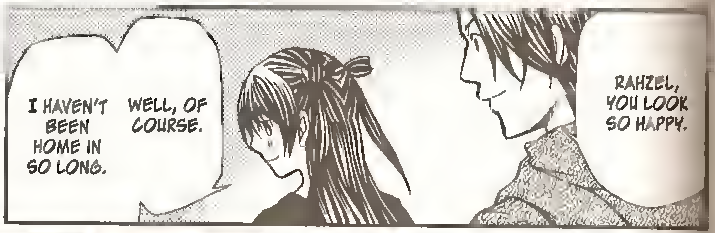
YES, SOMETHING MELTED OFF.
THAT'S RIGHT. THEY SAID SOMETHING MELTED OFF YOU.
I HEARD YOU'D GONE TO A SANATORIUM WITH SOME STRANGE DISEASE.
HEH. I WONDERED WHAT KIND OF EXCUSE MY FATHER CAME UP WITH.


UMM... I WONDER.
I WAS GONE FOR ALMOST SIX MONTHS.
AH HA HA. WERE YOU ON A TRAINING TRIP?

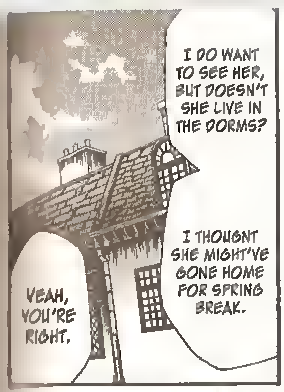
NO, NO. WE'RE HAPPY THAT YOU'RE MATURING EVERY DAY.
THE FACT THAT YOU KNOW YOUR WAY AROUND THE TOWN WHERE YOU LIVE...
HOW INSULTING CAN YOU GET?
I'M KIND OF IMPRESSED.

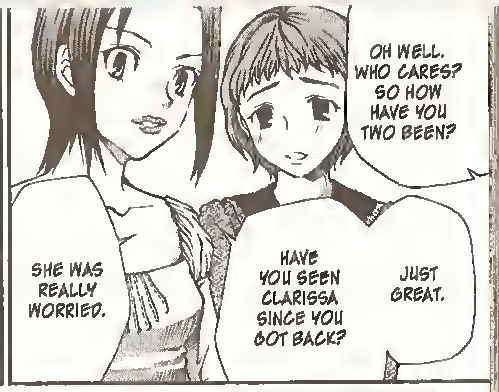

WHAT'S THE MATTER WITH YOU TWO?

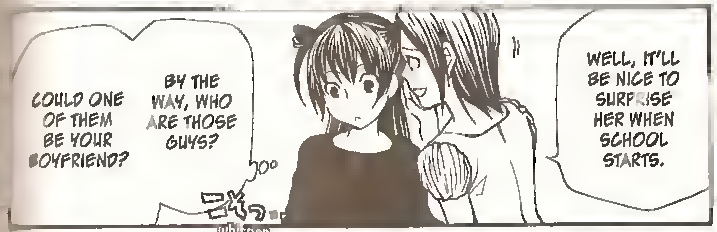

SEE YOU, RAHZEL.
SEE YOU IN SCHOOL.
BYE!
OKAY.
I'LL THINK ABOUT IT.
SURE.
WE'LL BE STAYING AT HER HOUSE FOR A WHILE, SO COME AND SEE US SOMETIME.
YOU'RE BOTH VERY CUTE, SO YOU'RE ALWAYS WELCOME.


I HAVEN'T BEEN HOME IN SO LONG.
WELL, OF COURSE.
RAHZEL, YOU LOOK SO HAPPY.

WHO'S MORE IMPORTANT TO YOU, YOUR FRIENDS HERE OR US?
WHAT?
CAN I ASK A PERSONAL QUESTION?


I DO WANT TO SEE HER, BUT DOESN'T SHE LIVE IN THE DORMS?
I THOUGHT SHE MIGHT'VE GONE HOME FOR SPRING BREAK.
YEAH, YOU'RE RIGHT.

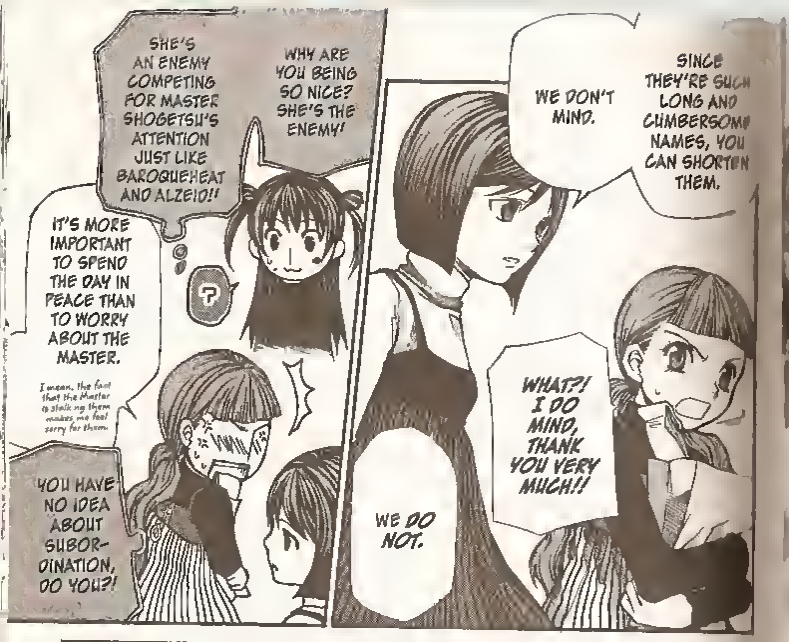

OH WELL. WHO CARES? SO HOW HAVE YOU TWO BEEN?
SHE WAS REALLY WORRIED.
HAVE YOU SEEN CLARISSA SINCE YOU GOT BACK?
JUST GREAT.

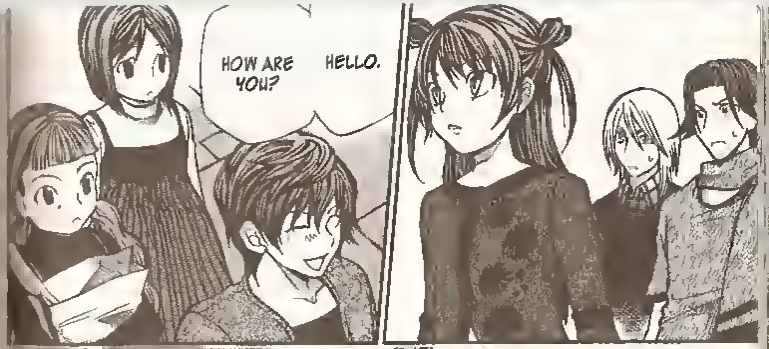

COULD ONE OF THEM BE YOUR BOYFRIEND?
BY THE WAY, WHO ARE THOSE GUYS?
WELL, IT'LL BE NICE TO SURPRISE HER WHEN SCHOOL STARTS.
whisper

YOU'VE MADE IT TOO SHORT, IDIOT.
UMM... BE NICE TO HIM.
NO WAY.
IS THAT HOW IT WORKS?
TO MAKE A LONG STORY SHORT...
AND THIS ONE IS...
...THIS ONE IS MY FATHER'S BROTHER. MY UNCLE, IF YOU WILL.

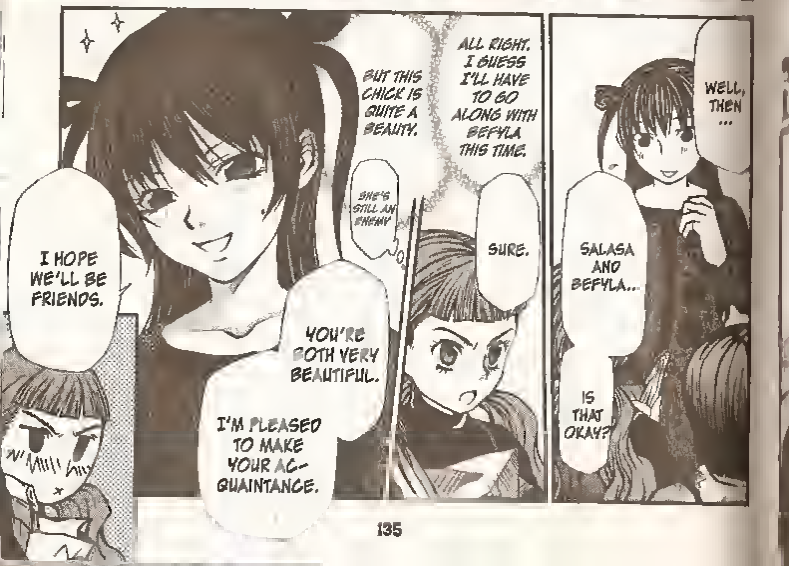
HEY, NICE GOING, AL-BOY.
WE GOT ALZEID'S GUN BACK FROM THAT SMALL-TIME THIEF...
... MOSTLY THANKS TO ME.
WHY DON'T YOU ASK HER WHOSE FAULT IT WAS THAT IT GOT STOLEN IN THE FIRST PLACE?
IT ALL STARTED HERE IN THIS TOWN.
IF YOU KNOW IT'S PERSONAL, DON'T ASK.
BUT I'LL ANSWER THE QUESTION. YOU GUYS ARE.
WHY ARE YOU TALKING LIKE AN OLD LADY?
OOPSY.
I DON'T LIKE PEOPLE WHO COMPARE THEMSELVES TO OTHERS.
THOUGH YOU'VE LOST POINTS SINCE YOU ASKED THAT QUESTION.
SHE'S MY BEST FRIEND.
AN INCREDIBLY BEAUTIFUL GIRL.
BUT CLARISSA'S AN EXCEPTION. SHE DOESN'T COUNT.
WELL!! WHO IS THIS MYSTERY GIRL?
I'M JEALOUS!
YOU MENTIONED HER EARLIER TOO.
NO WAY! INTRODUCE ME!
Mwa ha ha
NOW I REALLY WANT TO COLOR HER HEAT COLOR!!
CAN'T. SHE HATES MEN.
WHAT THE HECK DO YOU MEAN?!!
AND JUST LOOK AT THE QUESTIONABLE CHARACTER HE'S BECOME NOW.
BUT I KEPT GETTING GLIMPSES OF HIS TRUE SELF.
HE WAS SUCH A COLD JERK BACK THEN.
Hmm
...AND WE JUST HAPPENED TO MEET BAROQUEHEAT ON THE ROAD.
THAT SAME DAY I HAPPENED TO MEET ALZEID...
MY FATHER SUDDENLY TOLD ME TO GO ON A TRIP.

PUTTING ALL OUR HOPES INTO...
...JUST MAYBE.
AHH...
STAY WITH ME FOREVER, OKAY?
HEY!
HUH?
ISN'T THAT JUST A WAY OF PUTTING ON A STRONG FACE, JUST LIKE SAYING IT WON'T HURT YOU SINCE YOU DON'T CARE?
SAYING THAT SINCE NOTHING GOT PROMISED, IT CAN'T BE HELPED IF SOMEONE HATES YOU...
...OR THAT IT CAN'T BE HELPED IF PEOPLE GO THEIR SEPARATE WAYS...
YOU WERE RIGHT, RAYBORN.
...WE NEED TO MAKE PROMISES.
SINCE WE KNOW HOW TERRIBLY FRAGILE OUR FEELINGS ARE...
HUH?
SURE.
OH YEAH, THAT GAY PRIEST.
HE MIGHT BE BACK BY NOW.
MAYBE WE SHOULD GO SEE HIM.
THEN A STRANGE CULT APPEARED, WITH THAT DRUG CALLED ANGEL TEXT.
OH YES. THAT WAS WHEN...
...I WAS TAKING VEE TO OBGYN.
YES, RIGHT.
AND AFTERWARD, WE MET JELICE.
AND I WONDER IF WE'LL EVER SEE TAYLOR AGAIN.
A LOT HAS HAPPENED...
...LIKE WITH ADDY AND ASHMA. I WONDER IF WE'LL END UP FIGHTING THEM AGAIN.
AND...


SHE'S AN ENEMY COMPETING FOR MASTER SHOGETSU'S ATTENTION JUST LIKE BAROQUEHEAT AND ALZEIO!!
WHY ARE YOU BEING SO NICE? SHE'S THE ENEMY!
IT'S MORE IMPORTANT TO SPEND THE DAY IN PEACE THAN TO WORRY ABOUT THE MASTER.
I mean, the fact that the Master is stealing them makes me feel sorry for them.
YOU HAVE NO IDEA ABOUT SUBORDINATION, DO YOU?!
WE DON'T MIND.
SINCE THEY'RE SUCH LONG AND CUMBERSOME NAMES, YOU CAN SHORTEN THEM.
WHAT?! I DO MIND, THANK YOU VERY MUCH!!
WE DO NOT.


HOW ARE YOU?
HELLO.

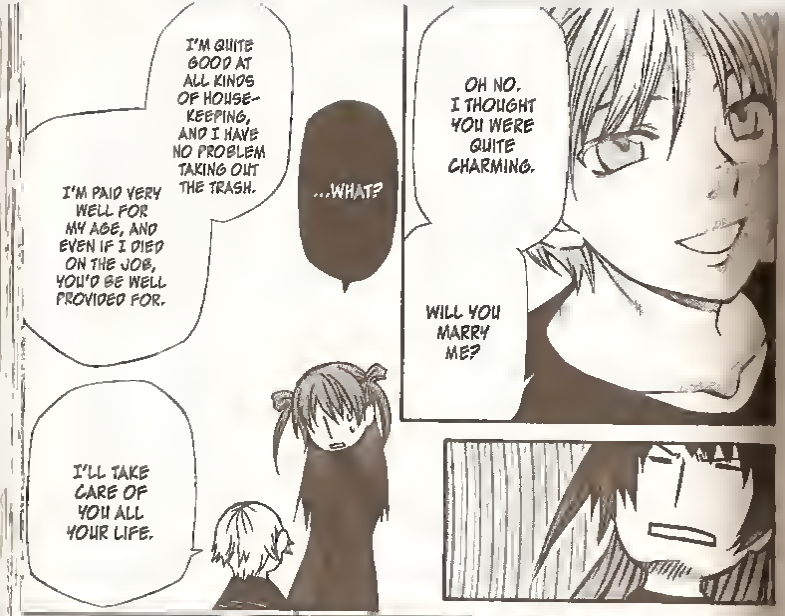
YOU MOVED HERE?!

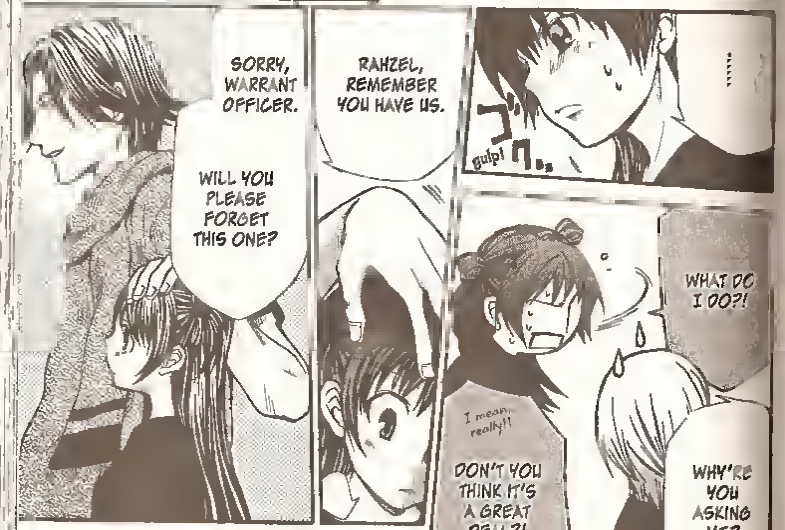

I HOPE WE'LL BE FRIENDS.
BUT THIS CHICK IS QUITE A BEAUTY.
ALL RIGHT. I GUESS I'LL HAVE TO GO ALONG WITH BEFYLA THIS TIME.
SHE'S STILL AN ENEMY
SURE.
YOU'RE BOTH VERY BEAUTIFUL.
I'M PLEASED TO MAKE YOUR ACQUAINTANCE.
WELL, THEN ...
SALASA AND BEFYLA...
IS THAT OKAY?

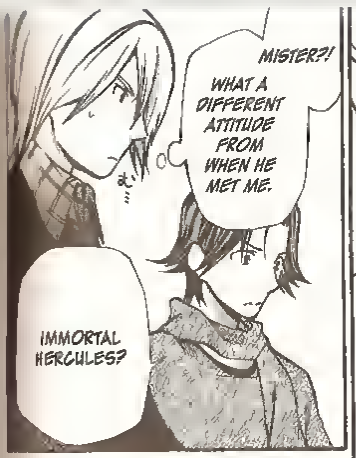
UMM
YOU'RE SALASANEIA AND BEFYLADITA, RIGHT?

I WANTED TO OBSERVE YOU GUYS.
WHY DO SOMETHING SO IMPULSIVE?
EH...

YOU CALLED?
snip
HERE HE COMES-- THE SCISSORS KING!!
Hmm...
SPEAKING OF CLAWS AND OTHER PINCER-LIKE OBJECTS, I'M GETTING A BAD FEELING...
YOU'VE BROUGHT YOUR WHOLE RETINUE WITH YOU.
IS SEAN WITH YOU TOO?
THESE SCISSORS ARE PROOF OF ADULTHOOD IN MY CLAN.
DON'T BE SO INSULTING.
WHEN YOU DEFEAT A LION B. REHANDED, YOU'RE AWARDED A PAIR OF SCISSORS.
YOU KEEP MAKING UP ONE LIE AFTER ANOTHER!
I FEEL SORRY FOR THE LION!!
bow!
...
Hide!
YOU WERE STAYING WITH THEM NOT TOO LONG AGO.
WHAT? WHAT ARE YOU SAYING?
HEY, RAHZEL. DON'T GET TOO COZY WITH THEM.
...
I FORGIVE HER.
Beautiful
Already knew it but
TO BEGIN WITH, THIS MONSTER HAS NOTHING TO DO WITH BEAUTY OF ANY KIND.
stab
I'M THINKING OF PASTA.
OH DEAR. HOW CLUMSY OF OUR DINNER.
MMM, PRAWNS ARE SO DELICIOUS.
WHAT ARE YOU MAKING?
Look!
The wound has already healed and it's become part of his body!!
Hey you!
DON'T JUST DISCUSS DINNER LIKE NOTHING HAPPENED.
ITS CLAWS ARE IN ME! IT'S STUCK IN ME!!
SOUNDS GREAT. MAYBE WE'LL HAVE SEAFOOD TOO.
LIKE LINGUINE WITH TOMATO SAUCE?


I'M QUITE GOOD AT ALL KINDS OF HOUSE-KEEPING, AND I HAVE NO PROBLEM TAKING OUT THE TRASH.
I'M PAID VERY WELL FOR MY AGE, AND EVEN IF I DIED ON THE JOB, YOU'D BE WELL PROVIDED FOR.
I'LL TAKE CARE OF YOU ALL YOUR LIFE.
...WHAT?
OH NO. I THOUGHT YOU WERE QUITE CHARMING.
WILL YOU MARRY ME?


SORRY, WARRANT OFFICER.
WILL YOU PLEASE FORGET THIS ONE?
RAHZEL, REMEMBER YOU HAVE US.
DON'T YOU THINK IT'S A GREAT DEAL?!
I mean, really!!
WHAT DO I DO?!
WHY'RE YOU ASKING ME?
Gulp!


MISTER?!
WHAT A DIFFERENT ATTITUDE FROM WHEN HE MET ME.
IMMORTAL HERCULES?

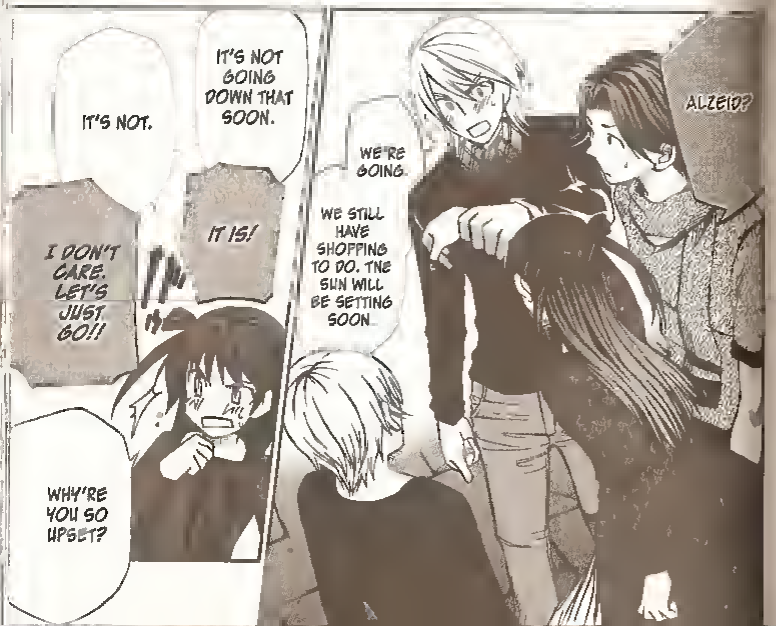
HONORED TO MAKE YOUR ACQUAINTANCE, MR. BAROQUE-HEAT.
I AM IMMORTAL HERCULES, WARRANT OFFICER FAY LISETTE.
IT WOULD BE A GREAT HONOR IF YOU REMEMBERED ME IN THE FUTURE.

NICE TO MEET YOU!!
IT'S MY DREAM TO FIND A PRETTY BRIDE.
YES.

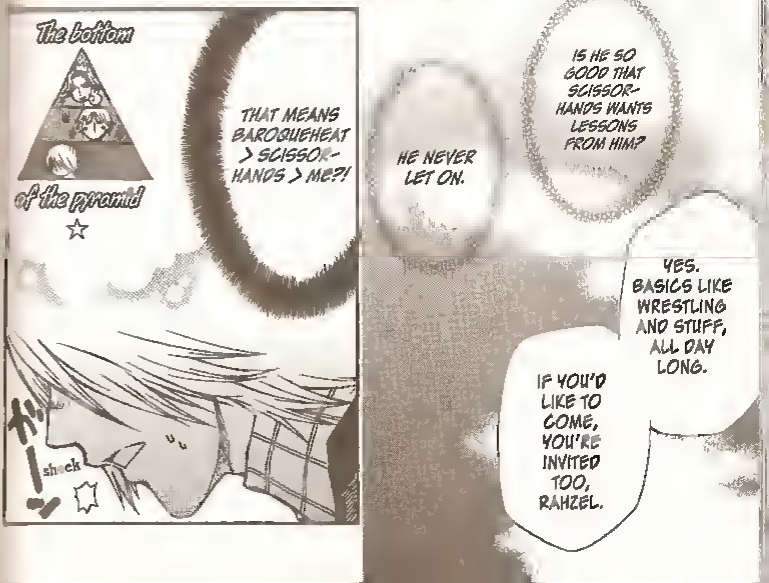
You jerk. Alexia! I hope you become planet Salt!
SORRY I WAS SO EMOTIONAL. I'M EMBARRASSED.

YOU WERE WITH SHOGETSU AT THE STATION, WEREN'T YOU?
I'M SORRY I DIDN'T SAY HELLO THEN.

REALLY, FAY, YOU'RE THAT GOOD?
Will you spar with me?
HUH? OH, NO. I'M NOWHERE NEAR BAROQUE-HEAT'S LEAGUE.
BUT RELATIVELY SPEAKING, I'M PRETTY GOOD, SINCE I'M IN THE MILITARY.
yank
THE WARRANT OFFICER IS QUITE GOOD. YOU'LL HAVE A LOT OF FUN.
YES! PLEASE COME.
YEAH, ALZEID WAS A FIVE-SECOND BEAT.
Hmph


IT'S NOT.
IT'S NOT GOING DOWN THAT SOON.
I DON'T CARE. LET'S JUST GO!!
IT IS!
WHY'RE YOU SO UPSET?
WE'RE GOING.
WE STILL HAVE SHOPPING TO DO. THE SUN WILL BE SETTING SOON.
ALZEID?

WHAT?! YOU'RE CHOOSING A MAN OVER YOUR BRIDE?!
I WANT A DIVORCE! I'LL SUE YOU FOR EVERYTHING YOU'VE GOT!!
THAT'S A BIT OVER-THE-TOP...
THANK YOU.
AND IF YOU'D LEAVE OFF THE "MISTER," THAT WOULD ALSO BE NICE.
WELL, IF MR. BAROQUEHEAT SAYS SO, I GUESS I MUST.
I'LL FORGET ABOUT HER.
stare
MILITARY TRAINING?
"Warrant Officer" means you're in the military, right?
TRAINING? WHAT KIND?
ALSO, SINCE I'M TRAINING DAY AND NIGHT, IF YOU COULD COME AND INSTRUCT ME SOMETIME, I WOULD BE VERY HAPPY.
I'LL CALL ON YOU TOMORROW WITH A GIFT AND WE CAN GET BETTER ACQUAINTED.

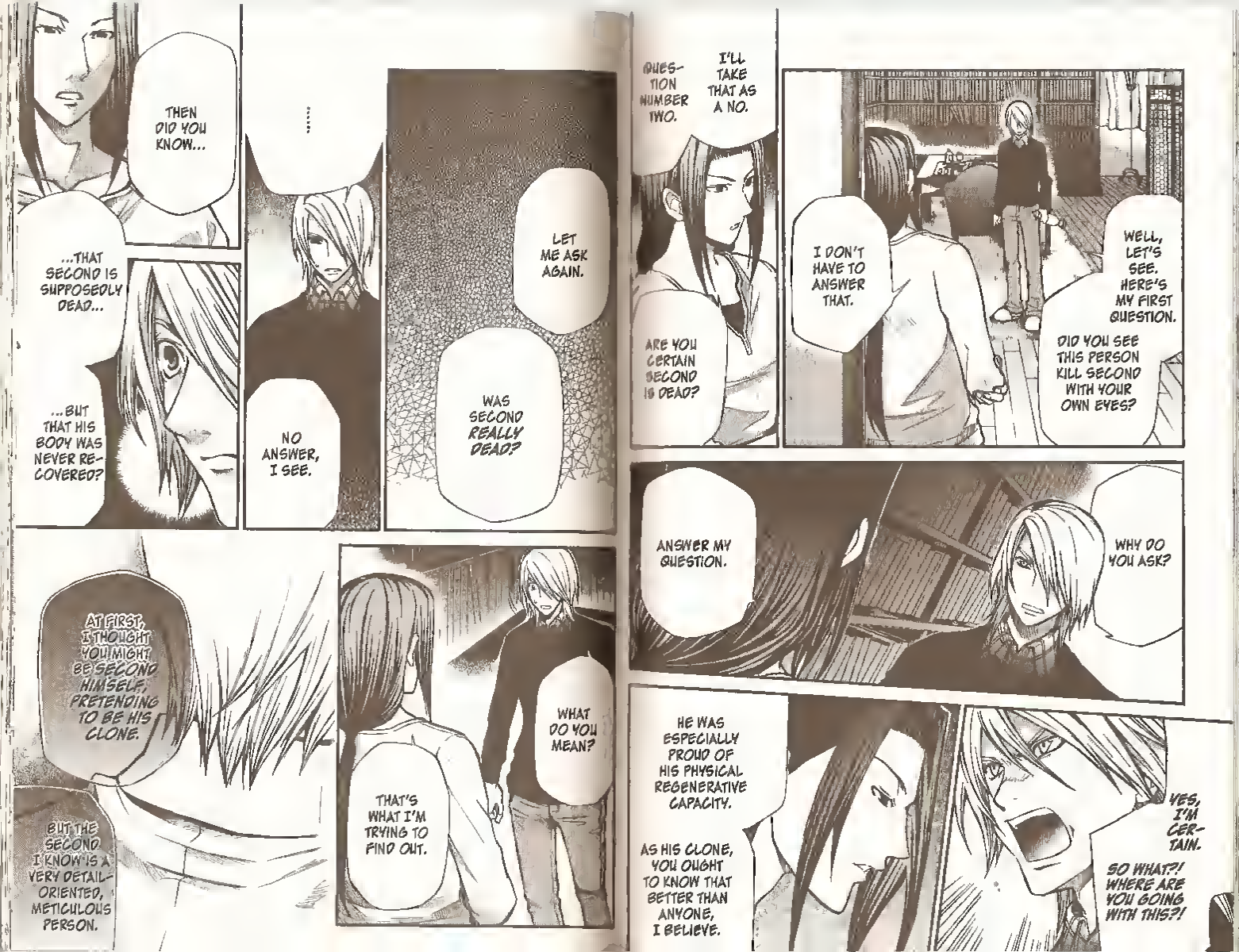

The bottom
of the pyramid
THAT MEANS BAROQUEHEAT > SCISSOR-HANDS > ME?!
shock
HE NEVER LET ON.
IS HE SO GOOD THAT SCISSOR-HANDS WANTS LESSONS FROM HIM?
YES. BASICS LIKE WRESTLING AND STUFF, ALL DAY LONG.
IF YOU'D LIKE TO COME, YOU'RE INVITED TOO, RAHZEL.

WOW...
FORGET IT!! I'M GOING HOME BY MYSELF!
spin
WE'RE HAVING EVERYTHING HE HATES FOR DINNER, THOUGH!!
SHOOT... I DON'T KNOW.
WHAT SHOULD WE DO, RAHZEL?

...AND YET HE SAYS HE'S ONLY RELATIVELY GOOD. HOW COULD I ADMIT WHY I'M UPSET?!
HE'S FAR BETTER THAN I AM...
あぁ
あぁ
……
//

SERA!
SERA-TEED, WHERE ARE YOU?
ベタベタ
ベタベタ
Creak
I NEED SOME OIL FOR THE LAMP.
WHAT'S THIS?
WHAT ARE YOU DOING IN MY ROOM?

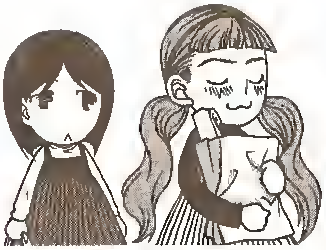
YOUR GUN?
WHAT A FUNNY THING TO SAY.
THIS IS SEC-OND'S GUN
WHAT ARE YOU DOING WITH IT?
ISN'T THIS IS MY GUN?
WHAT AM I DOING? I SHOULD ASK YOU THAT!
IT ALL DEPENDS.
WHAT'S WRONG ABOUT CLAIMING A KEEPSAKE FROM YOUR FATHER AS YOUR OWN?
I'VE HEARD YOU'VE BEEN TRAVELING AROUND TO FIND AND KILL SECOND'S MURDERER. IS THAT SO?
YEAH.
YOU GOT A PROBLEM WITH THAT?


THEN DID YOU KNOW...
...THAT SECOND IS SUPPOSEDLY DEAD...
...BUT THAT HIS BODY WAS NEVER RECOVERED?
.....
NO ANSWER, I SEE.
LET ME ASK AGAIN.
WAS SECOND REALLY DEAD?
QUESTION NUMBER TWO.
I'LL TAKE THAT AS A NO.
ARE YOU CERTAIN SECOND IS DEAD?
I DON'T HAVE TO ANSWER THAT.
WELL, LET'S SEE. HERE'S MY FIRST QUESTION.
DID YOU SEE THIS PERSON KILL SECOND WITH YOUR OWN EYES?
ANSWER MY QUESTION.
WHY DO YOU ASK?
AT FIRST, I THOUGHT YOU MIGHT BE SECOND HIMSELF, PRETENDING TO BE HIS CLONE.
BUT THE SECOND I KNOW IS A VERY DETAIL-ORIENTED, METICULOUS PERSON.
WHAT DO YOU MEAN?
THAT'S WHAT I'M TRYING TO FIND OUT.
HE WAS ESPECIALLY PROUD OF HIS PHYSICAL REGENERATIVE CAPACITY.
AS HIS CLONE, YOU OUGHT TO KNOW THAT BETTER THAN ANYONE, I BELIEVE.
YES, I'M CERTAIN.
SO WHAT?! WHERE ARE YOU GOING WITH THIS?!

WELCOME BACK.
HOW WAS YOUR FIRST VISIT BACK IN TOWN?
THAT'S NICE.
IT WAS FUN. I SAW SOME FRIENDS FROM SCHOOL.
WE'RE HOME.
HE'S IN HIS ROOM.
I'M SURE HE'LL BE DOWN FOR DINNER. LEAVE HIM ALONE FOR NOW.
WHAT? BUT YOU KNOW—
JUST LEAVE HIM.
IS ALZEID HOME?
HE GOT UPSET AND SAID HE WAS GOING HOME WITHOUT US.
WHO ARE YOU?
WHAT ARE YOU?
WHEN DID YOU LAST CLEAN YOUR GUN?
IT'S VERY DIRTY, AND THE SPRING IS SO WORN THAT IT SHOULD'VE BEEN REPLACED LONG AGO.
.....
Grr...
HE WOULDN'T BE SO CARELESS WITH HIS POSSESSIONS.
SO NOW I'M SURE YOU AREN'T SECOND HIMSELF.
BUT IF THAT'S THE CASE, WHY DO YOU USE HIS NAME, ALZEID, WHEN YOU'RE JUST HIS CLONE?
DO YOU PLAN TO REPLACE HIM?

I SUSPECT...
...THAT MAYBE YOU DID.
HOW DARE HE SAY THAT?! HE DOESN'T KNOW ANYTHING.
.....
grab
GODDAMMIT.
WILL YOU HELP ME WITH DINNER?
WHAT DID YOU GET? WHAT SHALL WE MAKE?
WE FOUND SOME CHEAP CRABS, SO WE CAN MAKE A NICE CRAB SALAD WITH AVOCADOS.
I ALSO GOT LOTS OF BRIGHTLY COLORED VEGGIES.
THE WOMAN YOU SAY YOU'RE LOOKING FOR--THE ONE WITH BLACK HAIR AND BLUE EYES...
...THE ONE YOU SAY KILLED SECOND--I DON'T THINK SHE EXISTS EITHER.
EVEN IF SHE DOES EXIST, SHE MIGHT NOT HAVE KILLED SECOND.

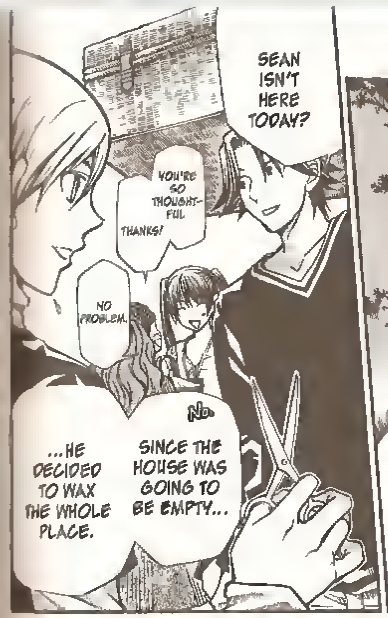
Chapter 68: Back to the Routine Part 2: "I will leave you behind."

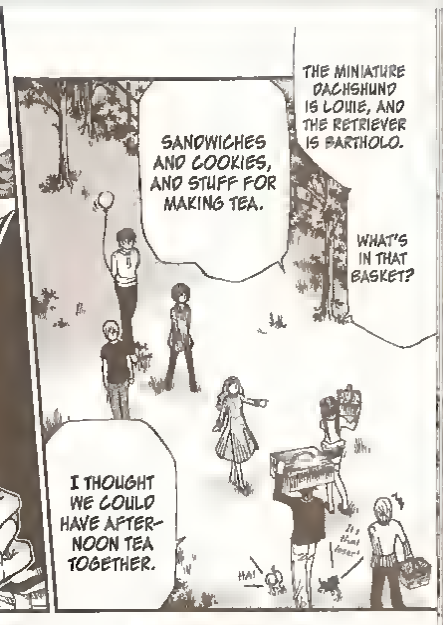


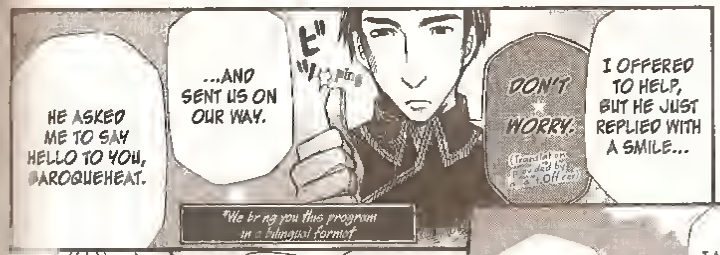
OH DEAR.
I DON'T WANT HER TO GET INVOLVED WITH PEOPLE FROM PROMETHEUS.
I only remember him vaguely.
The last time I saw him, he was still a kid.
SHOGETSU ...
IT MUST BE HIM...
...THE GENIUS ENFANT TERRIBLE OF PROMETHEUS.
WHY IS THAT KID HERE?
YOU'RE FORCING ME TO SEE THEM TODAY AFTER WHAT HAPPENED YESTERDAY?
CARRY THAT BASKET, WILL YOU?
OH!
I PROMISED TO MEET SHOGETSU.
YOU'LL COME TOO, RIGHT, ALZEID?
DOES IT EVER OCCUR TO YOU THAT I MIGHT HAVE PLANS?
NO, I'LL STAY HOME TODAY.
HAVE A GOOD TIME.
BE BACK LATER, FATHER!
ARE YOU GOING ON A PICNIC, RAHZEL?
WE'RE GOING TO SEE SHOGETSU'S PUPPIES.
HE HAS TWO OF THEM!
DO YOU WANT TO COME TOO, FATHER?
UH-HUH. SOMEONE I MET THE OTHER DAY.
SHOGETSU?
WHOA, THEY'RE CUTE!!
WHICH ONE OF YOU IS LOUIE AND WHICH ONE IS BARTHOLO?
...OH, AND ALZEID.
I'M AN INTERMEDIATE STUDENT!!
HELLO, RAZHEL, BAROQUE-HEAT...
YOU'RE RIGHT!
THEY'RE HERE, MASTER SHOGETSU!

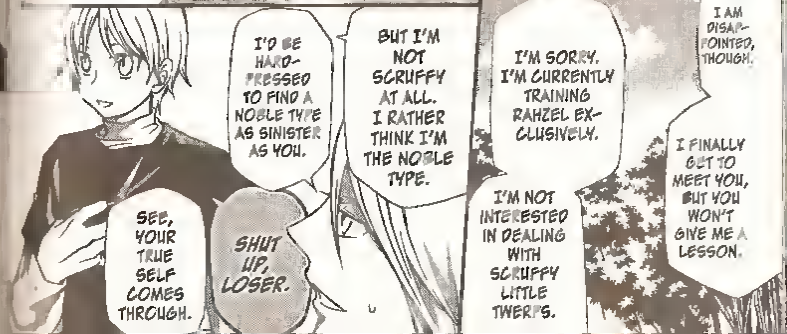
I'D HEARD THAT HE CAME TO TRAIN US EVERY YEAR AT THE BEGINNING OF MARCH...
...BUT THIS YEAR HE NEVER SHOWED UP.
YOU SHOULD'VE SEEN THE DISAPPOINTMENT ON THE MEN'S FACES.
REALLY?
OH BOY.
I'M SO JEALOUS OF YOU, RAHZEL.
FAY, YOU MUST REALLY LIKE BAROQUEHEAT.
YOU GUYS ARE A BUNCH OF MASOCHISTS.
EVERYONE IN MY TROOP LOVES HIM.
YOU CAN ONLY APPRECIATE HIS TRUE WORTH AFTER YOU'VE BEEN THOROUGHLY BEATEN UP.

.....
YOU MUST BE DISAPPOINTED, FAY.
pat
I WAS LOOKING FORWARD TO IT TOO. I WAS QUITE DISAPPOINTED.
RIGHT?
AREN'T YOU DISAPPOINTED?
SHOGETSU?
OF COURSE I AM.
I'VE JUST BEEN TAKING OUT MY ANGST ON YOU GUYS.
IT'S REALLY NOT TRAINING, PER SE.


SEAN ISN'T HERE TODAY?
YOU'RE SO THOUGHTFUL
THANKS!
NO PROBLEM.
...HE DECIDED TO WAX THE WHOLE PLACE.
No.
SINCE THE HOUSE WAS GOING TO BE EMPTY...


THE MINIATURE DACHSHUND IS LOUIE, AND THE RETRIEVER IS BARTHOLO.
SANDWICHES AND COOKIES, AND STUFF FOR MAKING TEA.
WHAT'S IN THAT BASKET?
I THOUGHT WE COULD HAVE AFTERNOON TEA TOGETHER.
HA!


HE ASKED ME TO SAY HELLO TO YOU, BAROQUEHEAT.
...AND SENT US ON OUR WAY.
DON'T WORRY.
I OFFERED TO HELP, BUT HE JUST REPLIED WITH A SMILE...
We bring you this program in a bilingual format


I'D BE HARDPRESSED TO FIND A NOBLE TYPE AS SINISTER AS YOU.
BUT I'M NOT SCRUFFY AT ALL. I RATHER THINK I'M THE NOBLE TYPE.
SEE, YOUR TRUE SELF COMES THROUGH.
SHUT UP, LOSER.
I'M SORRY. I'M CURRENTLY TRAINING RAHZEL EXCLUSIVELY.
I AM DISAPPOINTED, THOUGH.
I FINALLY GOT TO MEET YOU, BUT YOU WON'T GIVE ME A LESSON.
I'M NOT INTERESTED IN DEALING WITH SCRUFFY LITTLE TWERPS.

RAHZEL
I'M A WOMAN OF THE SHADOWS.
I EXIST ONLY TO BE USED AT THE WHIM OF MEN, AND THEN DISCARDED.
YOU'RE ALL—
IT'S ALL RIGHT, BEFYLA.
SHE COULDN'T DECLINE AT THIS POINT, EVEN IF SHE WANTED TO.
QUITE RIGHT.
YOU GUYS (EXCLUDING SHOGETSU), HOW DARE YOU MAKE THIS DECISION WITHOUT CONSULTING THE PERSON MOST CONCERNED?
SHE MORPNS TOO QUICKLY!
FAY, IS THAT YOUR WEAPON AT YOUR WAIST?
YES, MY KNIFE.
WHEN I CLAP MY HANDS, BEGIN.
BEGIN!!
HEY!! THIS IS TOO MUCH!
STOP IT! MAKE THEM STOP!!
NOBODY'S LISTENING TO ME!!
DIDN'T YOU SAY YOU'D NEVER BATTLED A MAGIC USER, WARRANT OFFICER?
WELL, YES.
I'VE HEARD LECTURES ON BATTLE STRATEGIES, BUT I'VE NEVER ACTUALLY HAD A MATCH AGAINST A MAGIC USER.
grr...
I didn't use magic, but...
IS HE TOTALLY DISMISSING ME?
HEY! HEY! HEY!
A SINGLE NO-RULES MATCH WITH WEAPONS AND MAGIC.
WHY DON'T YOU SPAR WITH RAHZEL INSTEAD?
HUH?!
YOU BRUTAL WIERDOES!!
WHAT'S THE MATTER WITH YOU GUYS?! DO YOU ENJOY TURNING YOUNG GIRLS INTO YOUR PLAYTHINGS?!
I COULD CARE LESS, BUT THE WORD "PLAYTHING" IS EROTIC, DON'T YOU THINK?
HOW INSULTING.
HE RELENTED SO EASILY!!
IT'S TOO MUCH. I CAN'T DO IT.
WELL, IT'S TOTALLY AGAINST THE RULES.
I'M INTERESTED, SINCE SHE'S BAROQUE-HEAT'S PROTÉGÉ...
If I'm hurt
You can always heal me with magic.
HEY, IT SOUNDS INTERESTING TO ME.
OKAY, LET'S GO FOR IT!

HUH?
I NEED TO KEEP HIM AT A DISTANCE WITH MAGIC AND--
OH DEAR MUCH FOR THAT
MY OPPONENT USES A KNIFE.
IF HE GETS CLOSE, I DON'T HAVE MUCH CHANCE OF WINNING.
Whoa!
WATER BULLETS ?!
SHE USED THE WATER FROM THE RIVER!!
whoosh
whoosh
COMPRESS! HARDEN!
I'LL DO MY BEST!!
TRY TO KEEP THE COLLATERAL DAMAGE DOWN, RAHZEL.
TOO BAD.
THIS GUY IS SCARY!!
HE WAS DEFINITELY AIMING FOR THE TENDON IN MY LEFT HAND JUST NOW!!
HE ...
JUST FOR FUTURE REFERENCE ...
...WHAT DID YOU LEARN IN THE LECTURE ON FIGHTING MAGIC USERS?
AND WORSE, HE WENT AFTER MY JUGULAR ON THE BACK-SWING!!
ドゴゴゴゴ crash
FIRE!!
GO, BULLETS!!

bam
block
swoop
spin
OH.
grit
BUT THIS ONE IS--
NICE BLOCK.
OOCH
?!
boom

IT TAKES TIME TO MAKE THE PREPARATORY MOVEMENTS TO DO MAGIC...
...SO USE THAT TIME TO FIND YOUR OPENING AND GO STRAIGHT FOR THE KILL.
NO WAY!!!
...BASICALLY, I GUESS JUST TO KILL THEM BEFORE THEY KILL YOU...
smile
DON'T GIVE THEM A CHANCE TO USE MAGIC.
THAT'S ABOUT IT.
...I'LL KEEP THE ATTACKS COMING.
SO WITH THAT IN MIND...
WHOA...
WHA?!
WHOA...
WHOA!!

THE KNIFE IS TOTALED, AND YET--
YOUR RIGHT HAND--IT'S ALL RIGHT? HOW?
YOU KEEP SAYING, "WHAT THE?"
WHAT THE?
COULD YOU LET GO OF MY ARM?
It hurts
YOU DID WOUND IT...
...THOUGH IT'S JUST A SCRATCH.
I THOUGHT YOU SAID IT TAKES MORE TIME TO DO MAGIC.
SHO-GETSU.
WHAT A SCARY THING TO SAY.
THAT'S STRANGE. I'M SURE I SAW MORE FLESH EXPLODING.
I'M SUPER-RARE!
WHAT? WHAT'S RANK SS+++?
WELL, RAHZEL IS RANK B+.
NO FAIR. WHY DIDN'T YOU SAY SOMETHING?
THIS IS THE FIRST TIME I'VE SEEN SOMEONE THIS GOOD.
IF I'D KNOWN SHE WAS SO UNUSUAL, I WOULD'VE THOUGHT OF OTHER WAYS TO FIGHT.
WHY'RE YOU INCREASING YOUR RANK AND RARITY ALL BY YOURSELF?
WELL, IT JUST SOUNDS KINDA HALF-ASSED, DON'T YOU THINK?
I don't like it

WHAT?! IT'S EMPTY?!
HE DOESN'T HAVE THE KNIFE!!
I THOUGHT I'D FINISHED HIM, BUT HE CAN STILL MOVE.
UGH ...
GAH ...
BUT...
...IF I CAN GET A GRIP ON HIS HAND--
HE'S REALLY HARDY!!
ANOTHER KNIFE?!

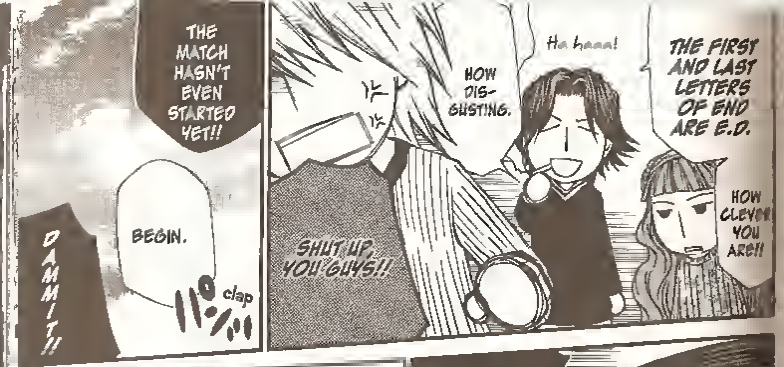
CHOW DOWN, FOLKS!!
I BROUGHT THREE KINDS OF JAM.
THERE'S ONE SCONE EACH.
THERE'S TEA TO DRINK. YOU CAN ADD YOUR OWN MILK.
SNACKS ARE FIRST-COME-FIRST-SERVE, WHATEVER YOU LIKE.
HMM.
IT'S NOT IMPORTANT. DON'T MIND US.
HEY, WARRANT OFFICER.
beckon
IT'S REALLY GOOD.
I HOPE YOU LIKE IT.
RAHZEL, DID YOU MAKE ALL THIS YOURSELF?
AMAZING.
Shhhh
A PIECE OF FLESH.
YOU SHOULD BE MORE CAREFUL.
!!
I'LL REMEMBER THAT.
WHAT CHANGED IN A DAY?!!
DIDN'T YOU GIVE UP ON THAT IDEA?
YES, I DID YESTERDAY.
BUT I THOUGHT IT OVER CAREFULLY LAST NIGHT.
HMM... I'LL HAVE TO ACCEPT THAT!!
SO, WILL YOU MARRY ME?
WOW, THAT'S SUDDEN!

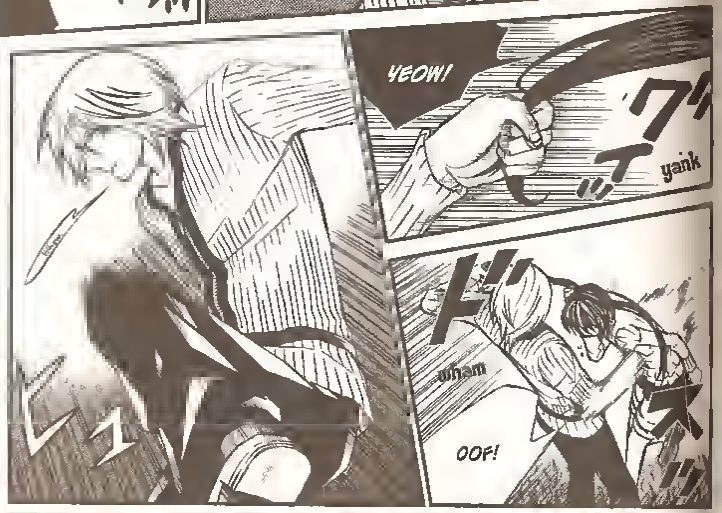
SHUT YOUR FILTHY MOUTH, LITTLE GIRL!!
WHO ARE YOU TO TALK? SHE'S WAY BETTER THAN YOU. YOU DIDN'T EVEN LAST FIVE SECONDS!
DIDN'T EVEN LAST FIVE SECONDS?
I SEE. YOU LOST.
Whoa
Hah hah
ARGH!
DON'T YOU THINK SO, AL-BOY?
HASN'T RAHZEL GOTTEN MUCH BETTER?
smash
HOW AM I SUPPOSED TO ANSWER THAT?
U-UHM...
U-YOU'RE RIGHT.
SHE'S GOTTEN PRETTY GOOD.
AL-BOY YOU'RE GOING THROUGH THE SAME THING

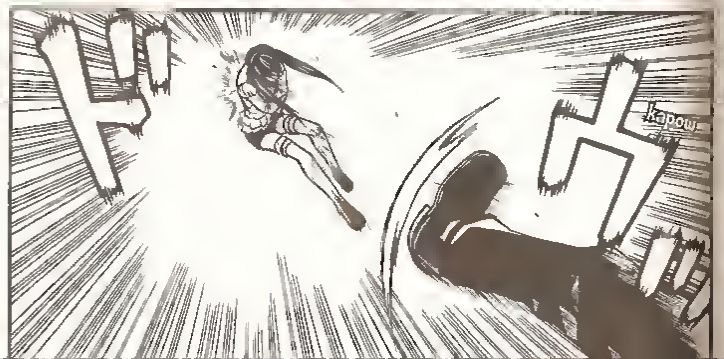
...BUT FOR ME, RAHZEL IS MORE DIFFICULT TO FIGHT THAN ALZEID IS.
I DON'T KNOW WHO'S BETTER OR WHAT...
DARN, HE JUST DOESN'T SENSE THE ATMOSPHERE AT ALL!!
I DIDN'T.
munch
munch
I THINK FAY MUST'VE TAKEN IT EASY ON ME.
ALZEID IS MUCH BETTER THAN I AM, SALASA.
GOOD COME-BACK, RAHZEL!

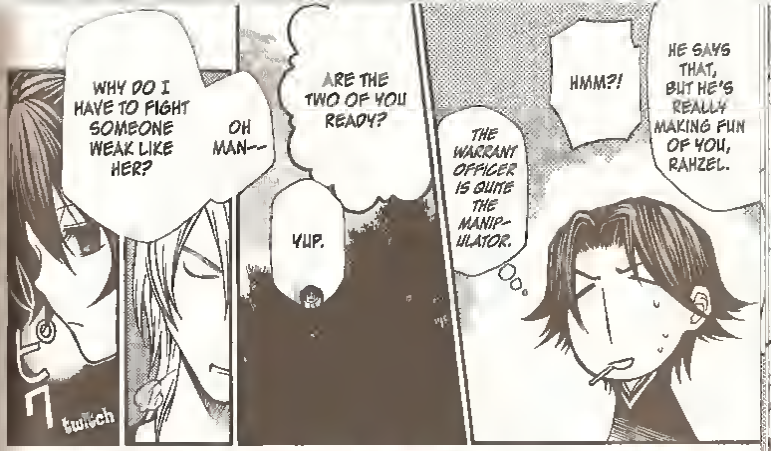
WELL, IT'S RARE TO FIND SOMEONE WHO'S SO CUTE...
...AND SO HARD TO KILL, AND WHO'S A FRIEND OF BAROQUEHEAT.
smile
WHY DO HIS COMPLIMENTS HURT MY PRIDE AND GIVE ME A VAGUE SENSE OF DEFEAT?
I WONDER IF HE KNOWS ABOUT ANGEL TEXT...
...THE EVOLUTION PILLS THAT DEE DRUGGED ME WITH.
WELL, I THINK YOU OUGHT TO JUST LISTEN TO THE COMPLIMENTS ...
...LIKE CUTE AND HARD TO KILL.
I'M NOT SURE IF THOSE ARE COMPLIMENTS.
HMM.
I FEEL KIND OF BAD.
EVEN THOUGH I DIDN'T INTEND TO DO IT, IT IS DOPING.
YOU'VE GOTTEN A LOT BETTER THAN WHEN WE FIRST MET, THAT'S FOR SURE.
SO MUCH BETTER THAT ONE MIGHT SUSPECT DOPING.

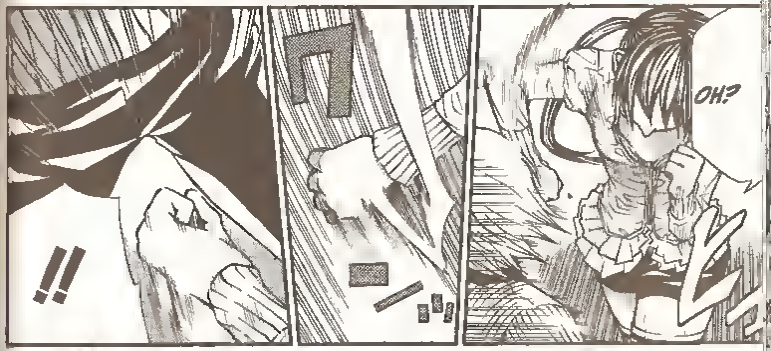
HERE ARE THE RULES FOR THIS MATCH: RAHZEL CAN USE MAGIC...
...AND DO YOU NEED TO USE IT TOO, ALZEID?
WHAT?!
HOW DID IT COME TO THIS?
HOW SHOULD I KNOW?
GO RAHZEL AND ALZEID!
THEY'RE SPECTATORS
I thought the more the merrier.
SHOGETSU, WHAT ON EARTH ARE THOSE?
Balloon head dramatic?
HOW CAN I ANSWER ANYTHING BUT NO WHEN HE PUTS IT THAT WAY?!
SHOOT!
YOU--
TRICK SCIENCE'S HANDS
I'LL GIVE YOU THAT MUCH ADVANTAGE.
I JUST WANTED TO GIVE HER SOME ADVICE, THAT'S ALL.
WHAT? A STRATEGY MEETING?
RAHZEL, COULD I HAVE A MOMENT?
Whisper
WHAT? BUT--
DON'T WORRY. IT'LL BE FINE
OH MAN.
FOR EXAMPLE, THE TRICK THAT I USED JUST NOW, THE ROUNDHOUSE KICK...
YOU BLOCKED IT WITH A CROSS GUARD, WHICH IS HARD TO DO AND HARDER TO TRANSITION INTO THE NEXT MOVE.
like this
Kind of.
PART OF THAT'S FROM THE URGE TO HOLD BACK BECAUSE SHE'S A GIRL...
...BUT SHE'S ALSO PRECISE.
Whoosh
THAT'S HIGH PRAISE, I'LL SAY.
HIGH PRAISE?
SHE SEEMS COMFORTABLE FIGHTING OPPONENTS WHO'RE BETTER THAN SHE IS.
I THINK IT'S AWESOME THAT SHE UNDERSTANDS HER WEAK POINTS AND CAN COMPENSATE FOR THEM.
Well
IF SHE'D DEFENDED HERSELF WITH JUST ONE ARM, SHE MIGHT'VE BEEN KNOCKED OVER AND THE FIGHT WOULD'VE ENDED RIGHT THERE.
Rahzel is so tight
IF YOU DON'T AGREE, WHY DON'T YOU FIGHT HER?
HUH?!


THE MATCH HASN'T EVEN STARTED YET!!
DAMMIT!!
BEGIN.
clap
SHUT UP, YOU GUYS!!
HOW DIS-GUSTING.
Ha haaa!
THE FIRST AND LAST LETTERS OF END ARE E.D.
HOW CLEVER YOU ARE!!

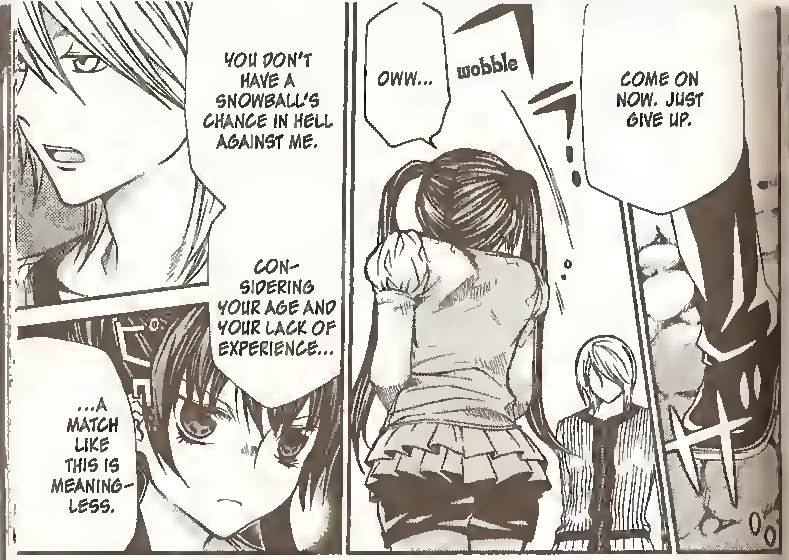

YEOW!
yank
uham
OOF!

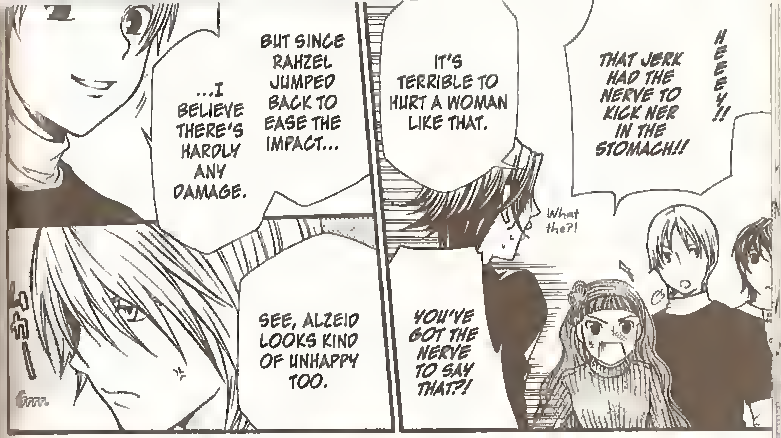

kapow

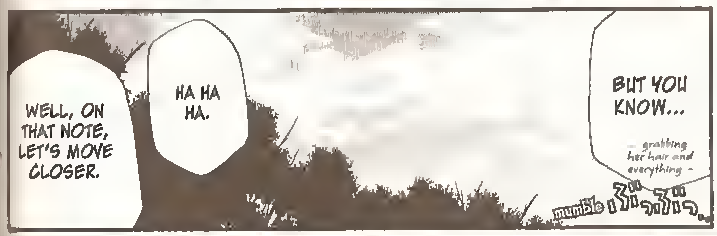

twitch
WHY DO I HAVE TO FIGHT SOMEONE WEAK LIKE HER?
OH MAN--
ARE THE TWO OF YOU READY?
YUP.
THE WARRANT OFFICER IS QUITE THE MANIP-ULATOR.
HMM?!
HE SAYS THAT, BUT HE'S REALLY MAKING FUN OF YOU, RAHZEL.


!!
OH?

WHA??
ARE YOU TRYING TO END MY MANHOOD?!
TSK.
WHAT THE HELL WAS THAT?!

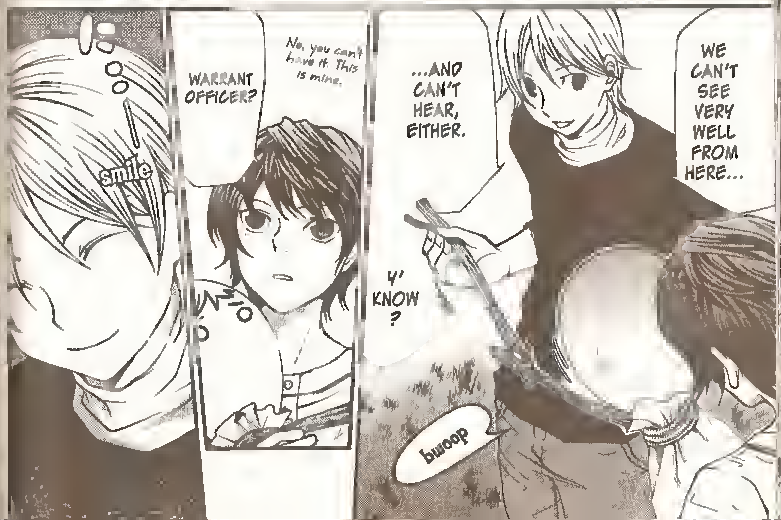

YOU DON'T HAVE A SNOWBALL'S CHANCE IN HELL AGAINST ME.
CONSIDERING YOUR AGE AND YOUR LACK OF EXPERIENCE...
...A MATCH LIKE THIS IS MEANINGLESS.
OWW...
wobble
COME ON NOW. JUST GIVE UP.


...I BELIEVE THERE'S HARDLY ANY DAMAGE.
BUT SINCE RAHZEL JUMPED BACK TO EASE THE IMPACT...
SEE, ALZEID LOOKS KIND OF UNHAPPY TOO.
IT'S TERRIBLE TO HURT A WOMAN LIKE THAT.
YOU'VE GOT THE NERVE TO SAY THAT?!
THAT JERK HAD THE NERVE TO KICK NER IN THE STOMACH!!
HEEY!!
What the?!


WELL, ON THAT NOTE, LET'S MOVE CLOSER.
HA HA HA.
BUT YOU KNOW...
- grabbing her hair and everything -
mumble

WHA?!
YOU DIDN'T LAST FIVE SECONDS, REMEMBER?
GIVE UP? DON'T MAKE ME LAUGH.
mumble

WHY SHOULD I GIVE UP...
...AGAINST SOMEONE LIKE YOU?

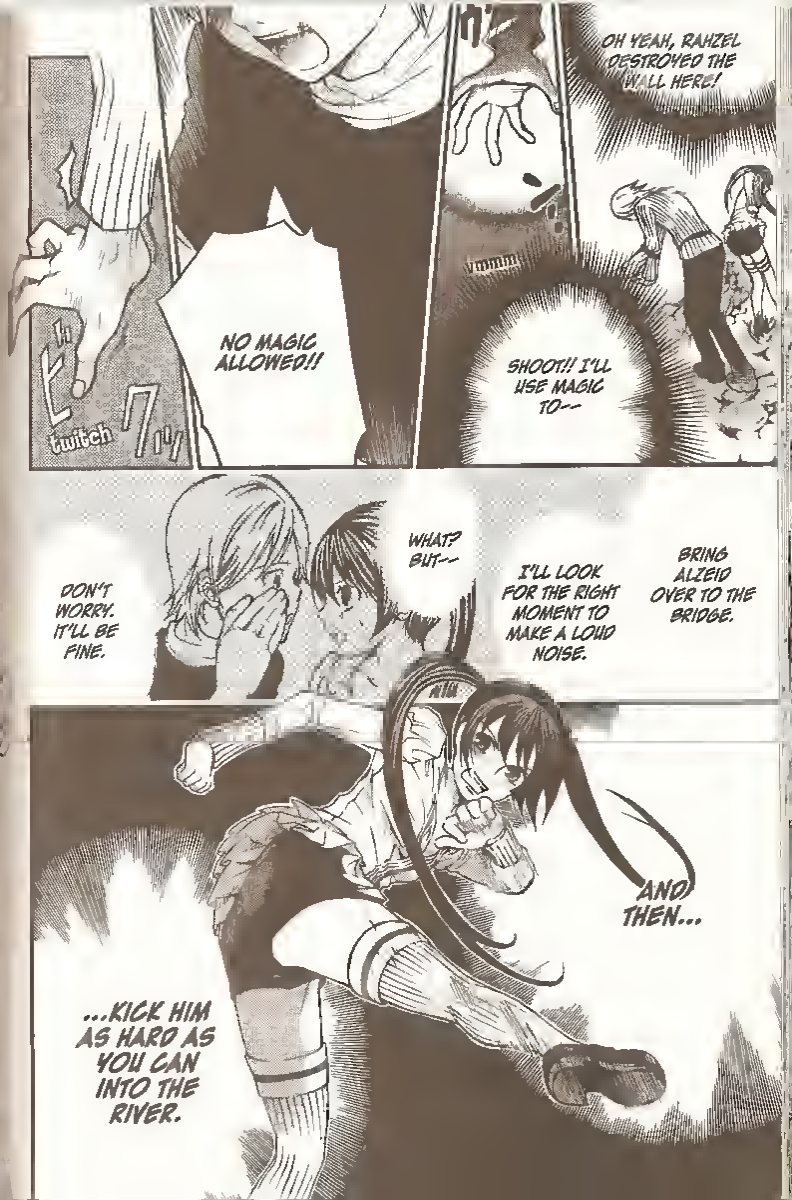

smile
WARRANT OFFICER?
No, you can't have it. This is mine.
...AND CAN'T HEAR, EITHER.
WE CAN'T SEE VERY WELL FROM HERE...
Y' KNOW?
boop

spin
DON'T YOU DARE THINK YOU'RE GOOD ENOUGH...
!!
pow
...TO LOOK...
spin
...AWAY!!
!!
KAH...
wobble
wham

WHEN I KNOCK YOU DOWN...
blush
...YOU'LL REGRET THAT!!
...A SWIM IN THE COLD RIVER WILL BRING BACK YOUR SENSES!!

A GUN-SHOT?!
bang!
whoosh

huff
...I WIN.
PLEASE DON'T GIVE MY NAME TO AN INANIMATE OBJECT
Pull yourself together!
WHOA! BEFVLA'S HEAD---!!
FAY, YOU--
HMM?
He's dumbfounded
.....
WHOA!! NOW HE'S GONNA KILL SALASANEIA TOO!!
I protest!
WHAT'S THE MATTER?
I WAS JUST PUTTING THIS UGLY DOLL AWAY.
WHAT?!! THAT'S ME?!

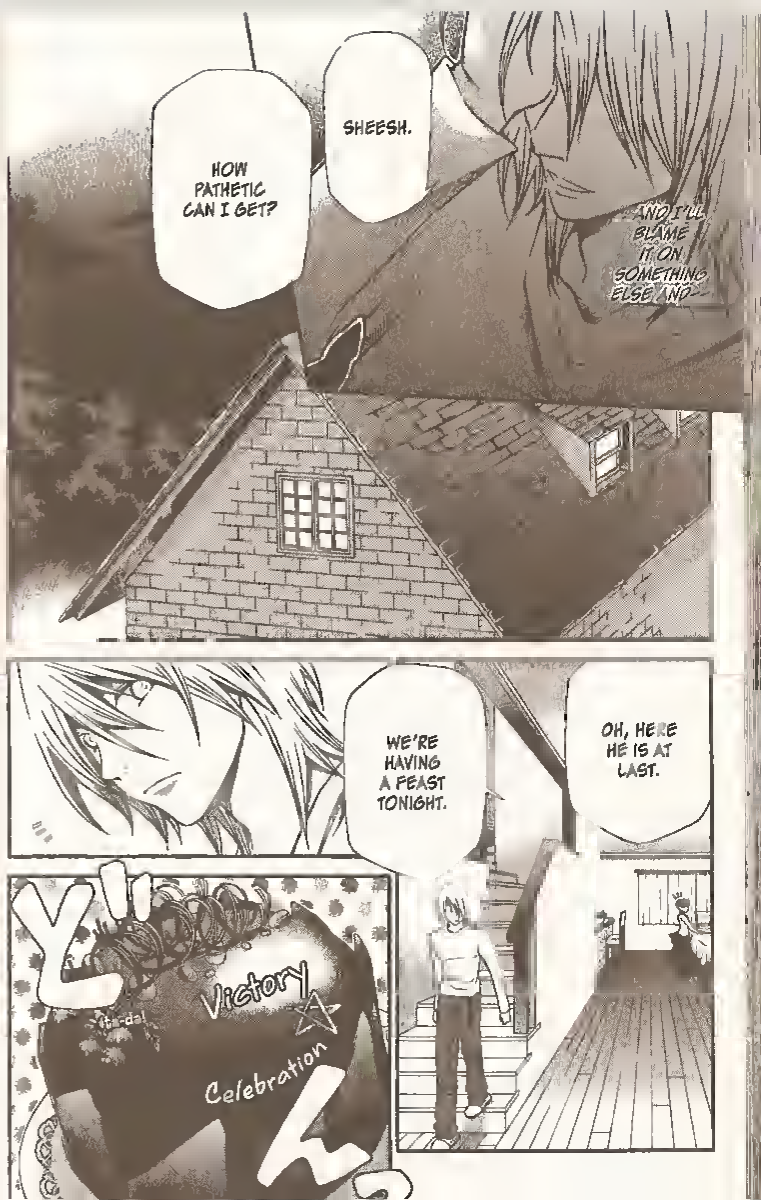

twitch
NO MAGIC ALLOWED!!
OH YEAH, RAHZEL DESTROYED THE WALL HERE!
SHOOT!! I'LL USE MAGIC TO--
DON'T WORRY. IT'LL BE FINE.
WHAT? BUT--
I'LL LOOK FOR THE RIGHT MOMENT TO MAKE A LOUD NOISE.
BRING ALZEID OVER TO THE BRIDGE.
AND THEN...
...KICK HIM AS HARD AS YOU CAN INTO THE RIVER.

BUT FAY, A MILITARY MAN, TRAINS ALL THE TIME...
...AND EVEN BAROQUEHEAT, WHO'S BETTER THAN YOU TO BEGIN WITH, TRAINS WHENEVER HE FINDS THE TIME.
I'D BE DOING THEM A DISSERVICE TO COMPARE THEM TO YOU, WHO'S JUST MUCKING AROUND.
Hmph.
SO THEN IT'S OKAY TO LOSE OUTRIGHT ...
...TO FAY AND BAROQUEHEAT?
NOW YOU GIVE ME A SERMON? I'M TELLING YOU, IF YOU HADN'T BEEN SO UNDERHANDED--
A MOMENT'S MISTAKE CAN HAVE DIRE CONSEQUENCES SOMETIMES, YOU KNOW?
IT WAS QUITE WELL DONE.
UHM... WELL, I KIND OF COPIED IT. WAS IT BAD?
WAS THAT MOVE YOU JUST DID, WHERE YOU KICK FROM A LEFT-SIDE JUMP, THE SAME ONE I USED?
.....
HEY, DINNER'S READY.
COME JOIN US.
I DON'T THINK YOU CAN EVEN BE ON EQUAL TERMS WITH FIGHTERS WHO AREN'T VERY GOOD.
TO BEGIN WITH ...
SOME PEOPLE ARE NATURALLY GOOD FIGHTERS WITHOUT DOING ANYTHING.
I THINK YOU, ALZEID, ARE ONE OF THEM.
THEY CATCH UP TO YOU WHILE YOU SIT THERE AND FEEL SORRY FOR YOURSELF.
AND SOON THEY'LL LEAVE YOU BEHIND.
...CAN'T BE ON EQUAL TERMS WITH GOOD FIGHTERS WHO DO SOMETHING.
BUT A GOOD FIGHTER WHO DOESN'T DO ANYTHING...
THAT HAS TO BE IT. OTHERWISE, HOW COULD I LOSE TO SOMEONE LIKE RAHZEL?
I ONLY LOWERED MY GUARD BECAUSE IT WAS YOU.
bam
bam
It's dinner time.
I ONLY--
HMM?
C'MON. HOW LONG'RE YOU GOING TO POUT?
ARE TOO.
I'M NOT POUTING.
Knock knock

IT'S ALREADY HAPPENED A BUNCH OF TIMES.
...MANY, MANY TIMES EVEN DURING THIS SHORT TRIP.
A MOMENT'S MISTAKE CAN HAVE DIRE CONSEQUENCES SOMETIMES, YOU KNOW?
Better hide it
chore
IT'S TOO
...AND SO RAYBORN ENDED UP HAVING TO DISTRACT THEM...
...AND--
I KNEW FROM THE START THAT IT WAS A DANGEROUS TOWN...
...BUT I DIDN'T EVEN PAY A BIT OF ATTENTION...
LIKE BACK THEN.
I'LL PROBABLY LOSE A GREAT MANY THINGS...
...WITHOUT EVEN BEING AWARE OF THE LOSS...
NOBODY BLAMED ME.
SO I PRETENDED NOT TO SEE.

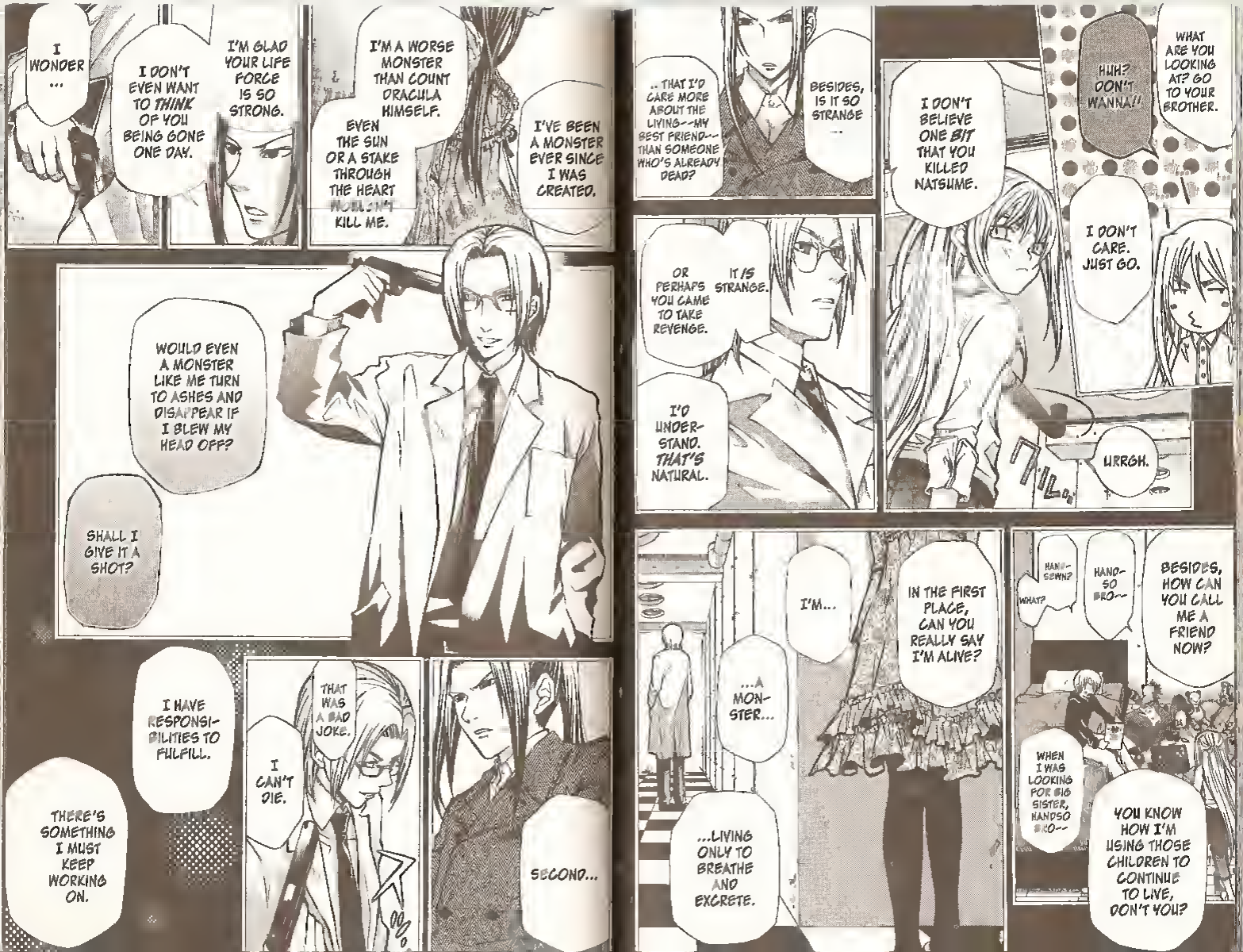
bam
DAMMIT!! WHAT? LEAVE ME BEHIND?!!
THAT'S FUNNY, COMING FROM A CHICK LIKE YOU.
crumble
HEY!
I WILL LEAVE YOU BEHIND, ALZEID.
DON'T YOU DARE THINK THAT YOU LOST TO SOMEONE "LIKE" RAHZEL.

DAMMIT!! YOU'RE ACTING LIKE A CHILD, ALZEID!!
DON'T WORRY, RAHZEL. I THOUGHT THIS MIGHT HAPPEN...
YOU'VE GOT ANOTHER ONE?!!
DON'T WORRY, RAHZEL.
WHAT THE HECK D'YOU THINK YOU'RE DOING?!!
FATHER MADE IT TO CELEBRATE MY VICTORY!!
I MADE A SPARE, JUST IN CASE.
WOO HOO! ♡♡
DID YOU MAKE THOSE ACTION FIGURES ON TOP TOO, BIG BROTHER?

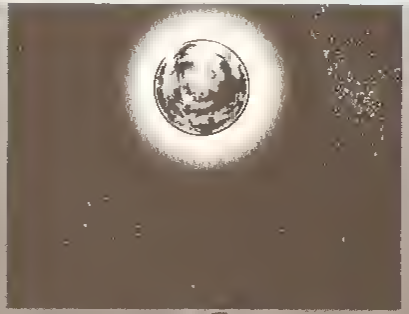

HOW PATHETIC CAN I GET?
SHEESH.
AND I'LL BLAME IT ON SOMETHING ELSE AND...
WE'RE HAVING A FEAST TONIGHT.
OH, HERE HE IS AT LAST.
Victory
Celebration

I DON'T RETURN YOUR CALLS-- BECAUSE I DON'T WANT TO SEE YOU.
HOW DID YOU GET IN?
AND WHY ARE YOU HERE?
CALL ME...
...HANDSOME BIG BROTHER.
YOU'RE BACK AGAIN, SERATEED?
HANDSO BRO?
WELL, CLOSE ENOUGH.
IT'S NOT NATURAL TO VISIT THE ENEMY OF YOUR OWN MASTER.
AND YOU'RE FAR TOO GOOD AT PICKING LOCKS.
I PICKED THE LOCK.
IT'S ONLY NATURAL FOR ONE FRIEND TO VISIT ANOTHER FRIEND.

HAVEN'T YOU GIVEN THAT BACK TO AL-BOY YET?
GIVE IT BACK? IT'S SECOND'S GUN.
IT DOESN'T BELONG TO THAT CLONE.
BUT I DON'T LIKE...
...HOW HE TREATS SECOND'S POSSESSIONS LIKE HIS OWN...
...AND THAT HE HANGS AROUND HERE WITH SECOND'S FACE.
I KNOW DAMN WELL I'M BEING CHILDISH.
DON'T LOOK AT ME LIKE THAT!!
MAN.
WOMAN.
HAG
WHICH IS IT? WHICH ONE?
OLD MAN.
AUNT.
UNCLE.
YOU SIR.
DIRTB.G.


I WONDER ...
I DON'T EVEN WANT TO THINK OF YOU BEING GONE ONE DAY.
I'M GLAD YOUR LIFE FORCE IS SO STRONG.
I'M A WORSE MONSTER THAN COUNT DRACULA HIMSELF.
EVEN THE SUN OR A STAKE THROUGH THE HEART WOULDN'T KILL ME.
I'VE BEEN A MONSTER EVER SINCE I WAS CREATED.
WOULD EVEN A MONSTER LIKE ME TURN TO ASHES AND DISAPPEAR IF I BLEW MY HEAD OFF?
SHALL I GIVE IT A SHOT?
I HAVE RESPONSIBILITIES TO FULFILL.
THERE'S SOMETHING I MUST KEEP WORKING ON.
THAT WAS A BAD JOKE.
I CAN'T DIE.
SECOND...
.. THAT I'D CARE MORE ABOUT THE LIVING--MY BEST FRIEND--THAN SOMEONE WHO'S ALREADY DEAD?
BESIDES, IS IT SO STRANGE ...
OR PERHAPS YOU CAME TO TAKE REVENGE.
IT IS STRANGE.
I'D UNDERSTAND. THAT'S NATURAL.
I DON'T BELIEVE ONE BIT THAT YOU KILLED NATSUME.
HUH? DON'T WANNA!!
WHAT ARE YOU LOOKING AT? GO TO YOUR BROTHER.
I DON'T CARE. JUST GO.
URRGH.
I'M...
...A MONSTER...
...LIVING ONLY TO BREATHE AND EXCRETE.
IN THE FIRST PLACE, CAN YOU REALLY SAY I'M ALIVE?
HANI-SEWN?
WHAT?
HANDSO BRO--
BESIDES, HOW CAN YOU CALL ME A FRIEND NOW?
WHEN I WAS LOOKING FOR BIG SISTER, HANDSO BRO--
YOU KNOW HOW I'M USING THOSE CHILDREN TO CONTINUE TO LIVE, DON'T YOU?

...the music scene on Earth is in a pinch.



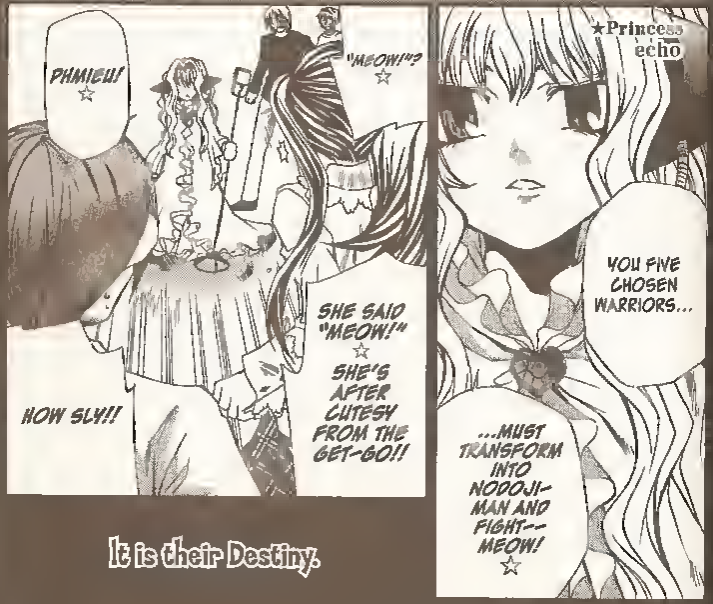
In the year 20XX, due to the advances of Net Empire's Chuck Mellow..

BONUS

Karaoke Squadron

Nodoji-man

by Mineri Ondoh



It is their Destiny.

I DON'T WANT TO ACCEPT THAT SECOND DOESN'T EXIST IN THIS WORLD ANYMORE.

END

HE DOESN'T EVEN LIKE CURRY ...!

WHAT?!

YELLOW ATE POISONED CURRY?!

Villans wait in the shadows...

NICE TO MEET YA. ☆

★new, yellow Jelice

I'LL TAKE OVER YELLOW!

THAT'S OBVIOUSLY A FAKE NAME!!

MY NAME IS URATOBAKU KAGURAZAKA. MY FAVORITE WORDS ARE "PUPPET REGIME."

...enemies obstruct our heroes path.

★enemy UNKNOWN

LET'S SEE HOW GOOD YOU REALLY ARE.

A new encounter...

YOUR OUTFITS...

...TOTALLY SUCK!!!!

I KNOW YOU KNOW IT!

★red mic Rahzel

...with a truth that cannot be accepted.

...and they finally come face to face...

★Yellow mic Soresta

ALZEID IS MORE IMPORTANT THAN LIFE ITSELF.

The battle continues!

WHAT?!

YOU CAN'T HAVE SEX DURING KARAOKE?!

★blue mic Baroqueheat

Each has their own reasons..

★green mic Rayborn

FOR FRIENDS, OF COURSE!!

★White mic Alzeid

BECAUSE THEY'RE THERE!!

WHY DO WE CLIMB MOUNTAINS?

Friendships are born!

As society crumbles...

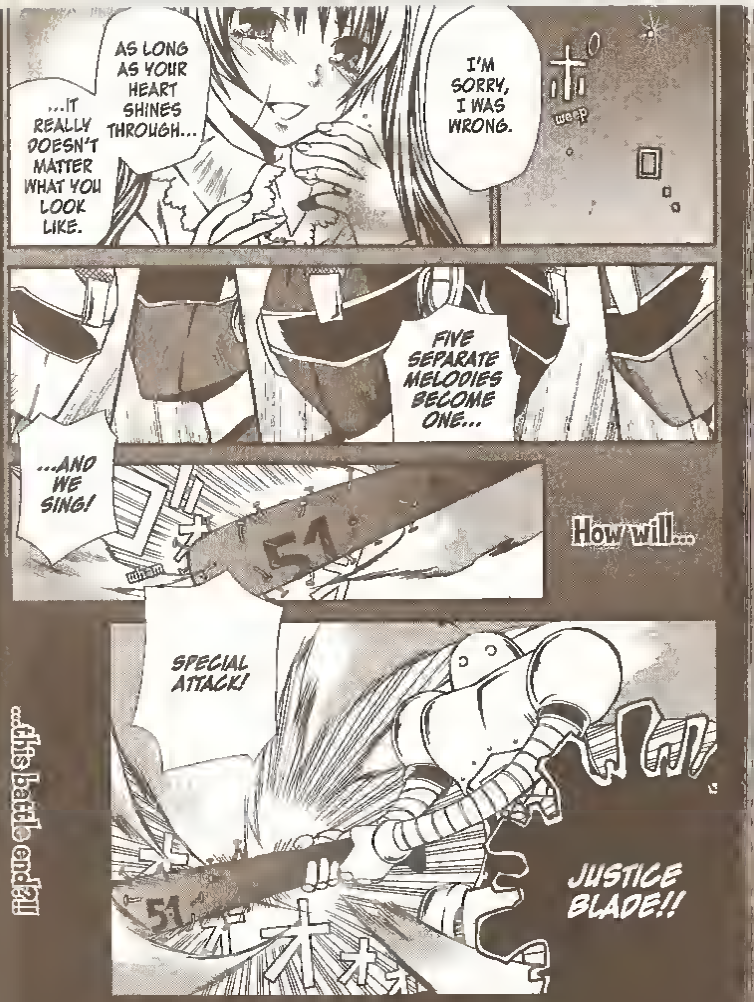
People in masks not allowed inside this store.

Lovely Mart

WHAT?

WHY CAN'T HEROES OF JUSTICE ENTER A CONVENIENCE STORE?

WE'LL LAUNCH A COUNTERATTACK WITH SUPER-COMBO-MECHA KOTETSU!!


AS LONG AS YOUR HEART SHINES THROUGH...
...IT REALLY DOESN'T MATTER WHAT YOU LOOK LIKE.
I'M SORRY, I WAS WRONG.
FIVE SEPARATE MELODIES BECOME ONE...
...AND WE SING!
How will...
SPECIAL ATTACK!
JUSTICE BLADE!!
...this battle end?!

Coming soon!!

The End

Bonus. Karaoke Squadron Nodoji-man

This is a parallel story that appeared in the little booklet Kozerosum. To fit the title they gave me, I wrote it thinking, "What if Dazzle were a superhero team story?" I didn't plan to include it in this volume, but since the booklet version unfortunately had the left and right pages reversed, we wanted the little story to see the light of day printed correctly. It's an idiotic manga.

By the way, we're currently starting a campaign with some other publishers called Minari Endoh Maniax. I'll be doing new drawings, etc., with some related to Dazzle, so please check it out. Unpublished short stories and stuff will be included in it too. The next volume is number 10. Double digits already! I'm hoping to finish it on the early side if I can. Since I have a bunch of drafts done already, it shouldn't take too long, but...

遠藤海成
Minari Endoh

Dazzle Volume 9 Postscript

Sorry to keep you waiting for such a long time. I now bring you volume nine of Dazzle.

Chapter 62: Under the Deep Blue Sky
Alzeid-san's night before the parade of incompetence. Alzeid-san looks so good getting pummeled!

Chapter 63: A Fable for Someone
It's Alzeid-san's parade of incompetence. He doesn't hesitate to attack a small child from behind. Good going, Alzeid-san! It's also so cool how you get completely beaten up so easily!

Chapter 64: Fate Unknown
A little break from Alzeid-san's parade of incompetence. Alzeid-san doesn't appear in a single frame. He's so cool!

Chapter 65: In Time, Points Lead to Lines
Resuming Alzeid-san's parade of incompetence. One of my assistants said seriously, "I just can't get myself to like Alzeid. He's too childish." Alzeid-san, you're so rad!

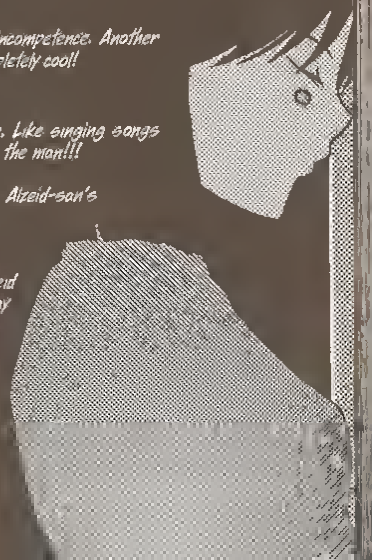
Chapter 66: At Last, Daylight Slowly Breaks
The climax of Alzeid-san's parade of incompetence!! Big-talking, five-second-beat Alzeid-san is totally rad!

Chapter 67: In the Town Where It All Began
We're close to the end of Alzeid-san's parade of incompetence. Another totally childish outbreak ☆ from Alzeid-san. How completely cool!

Chapter 68: "I will leave you behind."
The night after Alzeid-san's parade of incompetence. Like singing songs around the campfire. It's like that. Alzeid-san, you're the man!!!

And so volume nine in its entirety was filled with Alzeid-san's parade of incompetence, but now I have a problem.
How can I make Alzeid-san look good again?

I realized that there isn't a single episode in which Alzeid can reclaim his good name. That's right, all the way through to the very end, book after book after book. In the future, if you find Alzeid being nice in some situation, it's only because it was completely made up or the author wrote it without understanding how nice or cool he really is.
By the way, we're nowhere near the ending at all. Dazzle will keep going for a long time to come.



In the next Dazzle!

Rahzel and company's journey to Vellnene, the town with blue-eyed, black-haired residents where Alzeid hopes to gather clues about his father's killer, finally reaches its goal--but will he like the answers he finds? And why was Rahzel so reluctant to go there? The truth behind the night Rahzel was abandoned in the woods as a child is finally revealed--and at long last, Rahzel's father shows his face!